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CHAPTER ONE

WHAT is your private mind-portrait of a salesman? Maybe you conjure up a flashy fellow, with a fast and unstoppable flow of patter, with his foot firmly in the door, trying to unload on you a set of encyclopaedias that you can't afford and don't want anyway.

Put this image out of your mind. Relegate it to the limbo reserved for all stale, old-fashioned notions. For this concept of the salesman went out with the Model T Ford and the antimacassar.

Of course, there are still door-to-door salesmen. And some still practise dubious tricks. You have heard of switch-selling. This means, in brief, offering a customer a shoddy product at a low price, and then unloading on him a more costly item which he hasn't asked for.

This is trickery. Quite rightly, moral indignation is aroused, hot and strong, when these crooks are uncovered. But they are the evil fringe of the profession. They trade on the gullibility of those one-a-minute customers, usually women, who don't bother to read the small print on those enticing agreements.

They should be condemned as roundly as the confidence man, the doctor with an illegal practice, the share-pusher, or the fabricating journalist.

This is a guide to salesmanship as a profession, as a vital and indispensable ingredient in the commercial life of Britain. It is an expanding profession, and its

skills are becoming more precise as its numbers grow. It is the one calling left where a man's rewards largely depend on his own initiative, industry, and expertise.

It is growing in status. In the United States, the salesman has honour in his community. One industrial leader calls him 'the necessary cog, without which the entire industrial machinery would not function.' And this concept of the salesman is spreading to Europe – and to Britain.

During 1961, the earnings of the average salesman increased by five per cent, and this general rise will probably be repeated, and maybe increased, in subsequent years.

Mr. J. Maguire, secretary of the United Commercial Travellers' Association, says: 'Many companies tell us that they are looking for travelling executives. They require men who sell more convincingly because they don't have to refer back to head office for the answers to questions.'

The salesman is one arm in the combined marketing operation. He now needs to know something of advertising, public relations, direct mail, packaging, point-of-sale, as well as being master of his own products or services and the techniques necessary to sell them.

(And there is plenty of room at the top, too.) There is no exact figure for the number of salesmen in Britain, but they probably number about 200,000. For every ten salesmen, there is one executive. In 1962, eight out of ten companies who collaborated in a survey expected to increase their sales – and their sales force.

The road to the executive desk is thus widening

every year, every month, every day. But you cannot travel to the end of it unless you acquire the basic knowledge of the salesman on the road.

What are the prospects? As an indication, one large firm of cigarette manufacturers has a marketing executive, who began as a tyro salesman, who is now earning between £1,750 and £2,000 a year. And he is only twenty-eight.

The Marketing Manager of a firm producing domestic heating equipment has an annual salary of £2,750. And he is thirty-five.

One sales consultant has estimated that any salesman worth his salt can command at least £2,000 a year by the time he is thirty.

But, remember, the large salaries and other rewards do come as a result of application and study. They don't fall into your lap. As selling becomes a science, so the selection of the top appointments is governed by the knowledge of the applicant.

You CAN sell without reading a book, without knowing the difference between a buying signal and a Belisha beacon. But you won't get very far if you merely rely on unaided experience.

Educational qualifications are sometimes necessary – for selling technical machinery, for example. But you need not despair if you couldn't match up to the 11-plus or flunked your G.C.E.

Ten companies were asked, confidentially, to give the educational background of their sales directors and their three top salesmen – a total of forty successful men of selling. Only one had had university training, three had stayed at school until they were seventeen or

eighteen. But the thirty-six others – 90 per cent of the total – had left school at fifteen or sixteen.

And the top salary of this group was more than £5,000 a year. The lowest was £2,250.

To be a successful salesman, in fact, you don't need the distinctive school tie, or the standard English vowel sounds, or entry to a St. James's club. You are judged, purely and simply, by results – and not by background.

But employers can be ruthless, and salesmen, whose life is often lonely, can be restless. A sales expert says that more than half the salesmen in the country change their jobs in a year – and very few move to increase their prospects or their salaries; they change just for the hell of it.

In general, it is the stickers who get to the plum jobs. Just think that the average cost to a company of a single salesman is close on £2,000 a year. This is made up of:

Salary	£700
Commission-Bonus	£300
Pension	£70
Car	£300
Expenses	£300
Supervision	£250
	—
TOTAL	£1,920

If an employer has the sort of faith in you that persuades him to make this sort of investment, he doesn't take kindly to your upping and walking out as soon as you've learned enough to be useful.

He is also conscious of the fact that only something between five and fifteen per cent of your working time

is actually spent in selling. The rest of it goes in moving yourself around, in eating and drinking, in completing order forms, in contacting your office.

It's a hefty investment in one man's skill – and most employers know it.

I asked several employers of salesmen the five qualities they wanted of a man. They were Application, Enthusiasm, Intelligence, Personality – and Loyalty. And Loyalty was the only qualification mentioned by them all.

One said: 'There is plenty of scope for advancement in my firm. When a chance comes, it is always given to the man who has been with the company for more than three years. Then we feel that he has decided to make his future with us. We will then try and give it to him.'

This is common sense. It also means that a salesman who fretfully changes his job for no good reason is likely to spend his life in the same salary brainet. He will travel all right – but he will be effectively standing still.

HOW MUCH WILL YOU EARN?

The first thing to say about the cash earnings of a salesman is that the pattern of payment is also changing. As the status of the job is being gradually improved, there is a parallel tendency to pay higher salaries and less commission.

There is another reason for this. As marketing becomes a more refined technique, an up-to-date management can more easily assess how much he can sell in each separate territory. If a company knows this, there

is less inducement to give a salesman a large commission on sales. If he's pulling his weight, he'll reach the firm's quota target. If he does not, he goes.

There's another argument against substantial commissions. If an area is poor – and no territory is exactly like another – the salesman cannot make a living, and resigns. If it is a rich district, he makes so much money that the company will either have to cut his rate of commission, or supply his best customers from head office.

Of course, some companies do vary the percentage of commission according to the potential of the area. But the trend is away from a salesman getting a cut on ALL sales.

And there's another argument. Take the grocery trade as an example. With the growth of supermarkets, multiples, and buying groups, much of the buying is done centrally. The goods may be sold in the salesman's territory – but they are bought in London or one of the provincial centres. This means that companies supplying food products can have no rule-of-thumb for judging the salesman's area, and his achievements in it.

That is why many companies – the Unilever group is an instance – pay a basic salary that gives a man a reasonable standard of living. This salary is geared to attaining a sales quota. And it is supplemented by a bonus incentive for extra effort above the sales line established by the company.

No hard-and-fast rule applies to a salesman's earnings. It varies from industry to industry, and according to the size of the company. A company selling encyclopaedias put into a recent advertisement that a man

could reasonably expect £2,000 a year. On the other hand, a sales force organization – it provides trained men to firms embarking on a special, short-term campaign – pays them £26 a week.

It is possible to paint a general picture of a salesman's earnings. It is made up of facts like these, taken from one survey:

1. Only 6 per cent of all salesmen earn less than £15 a week.

2. More than a third earn between £1,000 and £1,500 a year, and another third are above the £1,500 mark.

3. Two-thirds of all salesmen have cars provided by their employers. Only one in two hundred hasn't a car at all.

4. A young man of reasonable education can expect to earn £600 a year during his initial training with a company, with a car and expenses as extras. An average starting salary, after training, is £850.

5. A young man of twenty-seven – with at least five years experience – should be earning £1,200, with bonus, car, and expenses added.

The picture that emerges shows the salesman as no slouch in the affluent society. His salary has outpaced that of the office worker and many professional men. As British productivity increases, [so will his slice of the national cake. Nothing can stop it.]

Where can you earn most money? No doubt about it. Choose the company that pays on commission only. There are very few of them – only one in twenty of all firms who employ salesmen. Ten of these commission-only companies, however, stated in answer to a questionnaire that they placed no limit on earnings. The

SUCCESSFUL SELLING

average earnings of their salesmen were £1,575 a year. And the top men raked in the following salaries:

£4,700 (Textiles)	£4,500 (Insurance)
£3,000 (Shelving)	£2,800 (Car spares)
£2,750 (Furniture)	£1,600 (Agriculture)
£2,200 (Printers)	

It is unusual, however, for these commission-only companies to pay expenses, although some guarantee a minimum income averaging £850 a year. In this kind of selling, you are on your own. There's no salary cheque to cushion the bad weeks and pay the quarterly bills.

You need a tough temperament, an unshakable confidence in your own selling powers, and, possibly, few family commitments. It is the star job in selling. But it's tailored for those who are temperamental 'lone wolves'. And also, on the whole, for those sufficiently confident in their experience and product knowledge that they are prepared to rely on their own unaided abilities. It's not a job for beginners.

The next highest average salary is paid by companies who give no commission or bonus. Here again, such salesmen are usually more experienced than most, and many of them have special qualifications. For instance, companies who need technical representatives – men selling products which require scientific explanation – tend to pay the highest pay cheques in this group. Whereas the average salary is £1,370 a year, the higher salaries of more than £1,500 a year go to those who are technically equipped, either with degrees or specialist diplomas.

The salary-only salesman is more closely linked with

his company than any other. He is often paid by length of service and age and status in his firm, rather than on his sales record. His company will review his salary annually, just as it would that of any other employee.

And the salesman's time may be partially spent in other activities, like attending exhibitions, arranging demonstrations, and making surveys, from which no direct orders can result.

You will also find the salary-only system where sales are governed by the seasons. Toys, seeds, calendars, refrigerators – all these soar and decline according to the time of year. It is far easier, and more equitable to the salesman, for companies making such seasonal goods to even out the troughs and the crests of the sales waves by paying a regular salary.

Your first job as a salesman is still likely to be with a company that pays you a salary, but adds to it a commission or a bonus, or both.

Let's look first at firms that give a salary and commission. The average remuneration with them is around £1,300 a year, and there are four ways in which the commission element is calculated. It may be by:

1. Individual effort – and this is, by far, the most popular practice.
2. The combined effort of the whole sale force – so that you share in a general kitty.
3. On area or group results.
4. A combination of individual and group efforts.

Most companies will give you commission on every sale made. But many will allot a sales target, and only pay commission after you've reached it. This target is assessed according to the potential of the area, and

your own sales record. Thus, if you turn out a diligent and successful fellow, constantly out-selling your colleagues, you may find that the company will raise your sales target.

This is the incentive system, of which more later. The salary gives security; the commission provides incentive. A company can use the commission device to push slow-selling lines, or to increase sales for those of their products which have a greater margin of profit.

And some of the more considerate firms have a drawing account for their salesmen, so that they can have a limited advance on future commission earnings. So, if you do strike a bad patch, you can hope and pray that a lot of fat orders are just around the corner – and borrow on the strength of them. But heaven help you if the sales don't come.

Slightly less common is the bonus system. This may be paid yearly, half-yearly, or quarterly. It is also based on your sales, and it may account for anything up to twenty-five per cent of your total earnings.

Yet another variation is the standard bonus, which is paid to all staff, whether they go out selling or not. This is far less than the individual bonus – rarely more than seven per cent of your whole take – but some firms believe in it because it encourages the team spirit all round, and one department gets interested in the work of the others. And many men appreciate a lump sum coming their way just before the holiday and Christmas.

The bonus has another advantage. Suppose you are sent to an area where sales have been low, and your job is to work them up. You may have to toil and sweat to build up a list of customers – and your enterprise

won't be fairly represented by commission. A bonus gives you this sort of recognition.

You may have gathered that no calling has such a complicated pay structure as selling. But for the beginner one thing is clear. The most discouraging way to start would be to join a company that pays commission only. You may have the abilities to make a first-class salesman. But, in your first years, you need to perfect your skills in a safer environment. The commission-only jungle is strictly for the fully-trained wolf.

There is a final consideration to sway you when you examine the terms offered by a company. Pensions are normally based on salary alone. And you'll also find that, if you want to buy a house, building societies are reluctant to consider commission as part of your income when they are deciding how large a mortgage they can give you.

In fact, if your basic salary is low, you may find that your living standards will drop with a dull thump when you retire. And, if you are ill and losing all that lovely commission, you may wish you had a larger regular salary when the bills rustle through the post-box.

Of one thing you can be sure, however. Whatever the irregularities of the pay cheque, however often he may be away from home, a salesman has more chance of domestic bliss than any other employee in the country. Salesmen, in fact, have the lowest divorce rate.

Is it because they just don't have the time to quarrel with their wives?

ALL THIS – AND PRIZES, TOO

There's another kind of incentive you'll almost certainly bump up against. The thinking behind it is quite simple. No one can work at full stretch, month after month, day after day – even with bigger commission cheques in view. An extra inducement is needed for a short-term campaign – and it takes the form of a reward in kind. Maybe a free holiday abroad, or a new washing-machine, or a night (with your wife) in London town.

These contests are organized for particular purposes. Some of them are:

1. To raise sales of a single item.
2. To open new accounts.
3. To install more window displays for your company's goods.
4. To coincide with an advertising campaign.
5. To fight a competitor in the same line of selling.
6. To collect more cash with your orders.

Obviously, these objectives vary from company to company. But they all have a tendency to involve his family in the salesman's job, and this can be quite a boost to his morale.

What do you have to achieve to win a prize? Usually, you must increase your sales above your quota for a limited period, generally a month.

For example, Hoover Ltd. found that one of the intermittent credit squeezes had drastically reduced demand for washing-machines. So they devised a competition which required salesmen to sell more for a month. Those with the highest percentage increase

were given three days in Rome with their families.

Another contest, run by Dictaphone, was aimed at increasing the number of accounts. Prizes were offered to the top three salesmen in the form of gift vouchers – valued at £60, £36, and £24 respectively.

But oddly enough it is not always the most costly prizes that brings the best results. Many salesmen, happy in their work and proud of their companies, value the honour and publicity that goes with success.

That is why many firms run a quota club, with membership confined to those salesmen who consistently exceed their sales target. They are distinguished by a special tie, and they meet their fellow members once a year for a dinner-and-junket.

If this seems paltry to you, then you obviously believe that men live by bread – or radiograms – alone. But there is great satisfaction in knowing that you are among the élite in your profession. [And self-esteem is a vital component in the first-class salesman.]

To succeed, a competition has to capture your imagination. One firm, making the well-known household cleaner, '1001', managed to do this – and increase their sales by 100 per cent over a five-week period.

The competition was called the '1001 Car Rally'. The twenty-four men in the sales force had to complete a 1,500-mile course, starting from Manchester and going through various towns to journey's end. Their progress – on paper only – depended on the volume of sales they brought in.

Constant bulletins were sent out by the company, reporting progress. Thus, a salesman who sold thirty cartons would leap ninety miles along the course. The

scheme had the excitement of taking part, like Stirling Moss or Jack Brabham, in a Grand Prix event. Each salesman could compute his own distance travelled, and heard daily about his placing in the race.

But the prizes weren't high. Each salesman who completed the course won a fiver, with smaller bonuses for spurts over shorter distances. The outgoings in prize money were a mere £234 – but every salesman exceeded his target. And one man sold eight times as much as he had done in the corresponding period the year before.

A well-run competition can give zest and colour to your job, and does not entirely depend on the possible prize at the end. This kind of 'merchandise incentive', pioneered in the United States, is being more widely used over here.

One firm, which organizes sales contests on a points system, publishes a lavish, all-colour prize catalogue. The articles range in value from ten shillings to many hundreds of pounds – and each one is also equivalent to a number of points in the competition.

The idea is that you browse through the sumptuous illustrations, decide on, say, a yacht for Christmas, and then work over the odds to achieve it. This is not as far-fetched as it may seem. In America, one or two big companies have given Cadillacs and eight-roomed country houses to their star salesmen.

It is certain that this sort of payment-in-kind will grow in importance as competition sharpens.

Most companies, incidentally, will stand the income-tax liability on these awards. They are taxed by the authorities at their second-hand value. What usually happens in the case of a holiday, as an example, is

that the company adds to its cash value the income-tax you would have paid on the sum in the normal way. This is then deducted by P.A.Y.E., so that you are not faced with a tax demand for underpayment at the end of the year.

SUMMING-UP ON SALARY

Let's assume that you are an average fellow, never likely to sell a hi-fi to a tone-deaf customer. Imagine that you become an experienced salesman, but don't get promoted to sales manager or field executive rank. What can you expect?

The prime factor about a salesman's remuneration is that it does not automatically increase, the older you get. This is because a large part of a salesman's money is directly related to results and the number of hours he's prepared to put in to get them. Some companies – and especially those that pay salary only – do give a regular annual increase of around five per cent, depending on the year's profits. But they are in the minority.

But, as a general guide and as a summing-up to this pay-packet survey, one can look at a handful of typical examples.

SALESMAN ONE. He is 25, has been selling for six years with three companies. Now he works for a manufacturer of electrical components. His total earnings and benefits are:

Salary	£750
Commission	£375

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Car expenses	£200
Firm's pension	£50
Bonuses	£120
	<hr/>
	£1,495

SALESMAN TWO. He is 37, has been selling for twelve years with two companies. He now works for a confectionery firm, and he gets:

Salary	£850
Commission	£250
Car expenses	£280
Firm's pension	£30
Bonuses	£260
	<hr/>
	£1,670

SALESMAN THREE. He is 46, and has been selling for nineteen years with six companies. He now works for a company making men's toiletries, and brings back:

Salary	£1,100
Commission	£250
Car expenses	£300
Bonuses	£100
	<hr/>
	£1,750

Fringe benefits – like a car and bonuses and a non-contributory pension – can play a vital part in the salesman's well-being. They may amount to a quarter of his salary and/or commission.

They are not always disclosed when a vacancy is advertised, and companies do themselves a disservice,

and probably lose capable men, by keeping quiet about these extras.

The next step for you, the budding salesman, now that you have a broad view of the prospects, is to decide whether you are fitted for the responsibilities and tensions that go with the vocation.

CHAPTER TWO

BEFORE you plunge in to selling, examine your motives. Is it because you can think of nothing better to do? Is it because you wanted to be a footballer, or a chemist, or a space-pilot, and something, somewhere, went wrong? Is it because you like the idea of being away from home?

If you answer 'yes' anywhere along the line, pause awhile. For, to succeed in selling, the negative approach is not enough. You must be positively enthused at the thought of persuading people that you are bringing them a benefit. If you are not, you will shuffle from job to job until no company will take you any more.

It's as simple as that. The marketing director of a Birmingham firm asked the ten top salesmen what they really wanted to do – if it wasn't selling. Eight out of ten couldn't think of any other job that would satisfy them so completely.

He put the same question to the ten weakest members of the sales force. Seven of them wished they were doing something else. 'I'd like to be a doctor,' said one man, who had left school when he was fifteen and

obviously had had too much of 'Emergency - Ward 10'. 'I wish I were a farmer,' said one townie, who probably couldn't tell an udder from a rudder.

No, you can't drift into selling and hope to succeed. First of all, it requires mental and moral discipline. It demands that you have the will-power to discard your private troubles, and put an affable face to the world. It presupposes that you don't watch the clock, but complete your time-table of calls.

Your successes cannot be predicted. You may think you are about to pull off a big coup - and the hopes will vanish before your eyes. There is much disappointment. If you are one of those who are always postponing the distasteful tasks to a day that never comes - then selling is not for you.

But, if you can measure up to a salesman's job, your future is more secure than most. You read of companies laying off technicians and engineers, reducing their advertising appropriations, or otherwise drawing in their horns during a recession. You do not read of them dismissing their best salesmen.

And they don't. One Managing Director says: 'We had to reduce production by twenty per cent a little while ago. Reluctantly, we had to dispense with factory staff. But we kept all our salesmen. Without them, we wouldn't be able to pull through the slight recession. They had to show all their skill in presenting the company's product. It will be due to them that we can resume full production again - when their order books are full.'

Although your educational background is often irrelevant, many selling jobs do require specialist skills

and qualifications. The technical salesman is a necessary development as scientific progress complicates many branches of industry. After all, you can't sell the virtues of a computer if you aren't wise to the machine yourself.

But even manufacturers of quite complex products put the ability of a salesman to *sell* before any appropriate diploma or degree. Most people with an alert mind can respond to training in a difficult product. The man garlanded with academic honours may not be able to transmit his knowledge to the customer.

A precision-tool firm, employing thirty salesmen who sell mainly to other manufacturers, has only three with specialist qualifications, vaguely in this field. The rest are intelligent, have soaked up their engineering data until it pours from them in a persuasive flow, and know all the benefits of their product.

Before you decide to choose selling as a career, too, you must firmly suppress those hoary old fictions about the salesman being a beery back-slapper, a good-time fellow with some expenses but no scruples.

In fact, don't decide to become a salesman because you like to be there, pounding on the door, at opening time and be hazily ejected four hours later.

This is not the way that business is done. A salesman is the servant of his customer. He hopes to give him a solution to a problem. That problem may be that his shop is at the receiving end of a sewer's odours – in which case, the salesman can equip him with an air-conditioner. Or a housewife may be plagued with insects – and the salesman can provide sudden death in the shape of a fly-killer.

This is the modern concept of the salesman. He is an ambassador for his company. He is a helpmate to his customer. Does this sound idealistic? Maybe – but it is based on a fundamental commercial truth. If the customer is not satisfied, a salesman will get a chilly welcome when he calls again.

That is why the emphasis is on solving problems. That is why you will never make a good salesman, if you are inclined to cuff little children who stumble over your feet or take a red-hot poker to your mother-in-law. You must have a temperament which allows that other people *have a right* to be infuriating. The best personality mixture is one helping of self-confidence to three of unselfishness.

It is good selling to refuse a customer a suit which will not fit him. It is good selling to ring head office for a spare part to some piece of equipment that is not operating smoothly – even though it means collecting it and delivering it yourself, way after the routine working hours.

Look then inside yourself for these qualities:

- ✓ 1. A liking for people – *all* people.
2. Absence of nerves as you go into a crowded room.
3. Enthusiasm for mowing the lawn – if it has to be done.
4. An even temper under stress.
- ✓ 5. Willingness to help strangers at inconvenience to yourself.

This is not the portrait of a fellow in search of a halo. It is the silhouette of a promising salesman.

SUCCESSFUL SELLING

THE KINDS OF SELLING

There are five main groups of activity for salesmen. They are:

1. Selling repeat consumer products (i.e. foodstuffs, drink, household utensils, etc.).
2. Selling durable consumer products (i.e. refrigerators, sewing-machines, radio sets, etc.).
3. Selling repeat industrial products (i.e. cloth, metals, paper, etc.).
4. Selling capital equipment (i.e. machinery, telephone systems, tools, etc.).
5. Selling a service (i.e. travel, insurance, car hire, etc.).

Before you start to consider whether you feel drawn to breakfast cereals or excavators, one thing must be borne in mind. Whatever the product, much of your time will be taken by routine affairs that are incidental to selling. That is why it is emphatically not true that the volatile extrovert, without any organizational method, makes the best salesman. He may bowl over the customer – but he is just as likely to forget about the order.

The most arduous, and the highest-paid, job of all is that of the specialty salesman. A general definition is that he sells a durable article in a high price range which a buyer has to be persuaded is a benefit to him. In other words, he is not stocking up a store with milk chocolate – a mere order-taker. Every sale the specialty salesman makes is to a new prospect. He has hardly any regular accounts.

He must make contact with the prospect, by-passing doormen and secretaries. He must prepare a most

cogent demonstration of his product. He must be pat with his answers to objections, and fluent in his explanations of any knotty point. And he must try and so satisfy his customers that they will recommend him to acquaintances in the same need.

All this tests a salesman's technique up to the hilt. If the brand name of his product is little known, he is pushed even further. If he is selling something – like a trip to the Moon – which is not widely marketed, he has to convince the customer that there is nothing he wants more than a space-capsule. And this is difficult – to create a desire where not a flicker of interest existed before.

If a specialty salesman is concerned with a costly piece of equipment which is bought only once in a lifetime, and then reluctantly, he may have to cultivate his prospect over a period of years. He should know as much as an outsider can about that prospect's business so that he can help him to cut costs, or eliminate waste, by using the expensive product he wants to sell. It is a job for the man with patience, creative understanding, and an angler's flair.

A more placid life is enjoyed by the salesman who sells to wholesalers. For most of his time, he is supplying known accounts. He is keeping his wholesaler happy by ensuring punctual delivery. He is not often battling to sell new lines, although he will do this if required.

The salesman who sells to retailers is very much in the same boat. He has to make a larger number of calls, however, and he has a few extra duties to perform. They are:

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1. To see that all the main distribution outlets in his area are supplied with his product.

2. To ensure that point-of-sale material is effectively displayed by the retailer.

3. To persuade the store to give a prominent display to the product.

4. To tell the retailer all he needs to know about the product in order to answer customers' questions.

5. To keep the retailer informed of any special television or Press promotions, either nationally or in his area.

6. To make himself welcome – so that his own popularity is extended to his firm's products.

Another type of salesman is more on the fringe of the profession. He is the merchandiser, and his chief duty is not to sell goods – although, of course, he will and does – but to advise the shopkeeper how best to get results from selling his company's products. He has to be a bit of a diplomatist, so that his advice is not considered intrusive. He has to be knowledgeable about his company's policy on credit and discounts, on store lay-outs and advertising. This is a growing branch of selling, particularly with those companies that have large budgets for advertising and other promotion. The merchandiser can ensure that the impact made on the TV screen is not lost because the retailer has tucked the product under the counter.

This scamper through the classifications of salesmen is a rough guide to the opportunities that await you. It would be hard to think of any man who couldn't find the product, or the kind of selling, that would suit him.

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But many do not find the right niche. And these are they who fail as salesmen. If you actively dislike both the grocer's shop and meat, you are not really going to make much headway at selling sausages.

TAKE AN OUTSIDE LOOK AT YOURSELF

When you apply for a job, especially your first job, as a salesman, you will be judged, quite haphazardly and unscientifically, by your personality. The sales executive will scan you from top to toe, see if your eyes revolve shiftily in their sockets and if your finger-nails are encrusted with nicotine, and will largely accept or dismiss you on this inspection.

If he's a visionary sort of fellow, he will also try and guess what you will be like in, say, ten years' time. For it is in his interest to hire someone who is going to blossom with experience, and not wither with responsibility.

Thus, it seems a good idea for all aspirants as salesmen to take a sharp, hard look at themselves. If they are displeased at what they find, they are scarcely likely to raise enthusiasm in an employer.

Without expecting that you will all have Tarzan physiques and Bertrand Russell intellects, there are certain inescapable qualities for success in selling. They have nothing to do with the right accent, or the right shape of nostril. But they have much to do with the way you present what little you have got. And they can be learned.

They can be discussed under useful categories, the first being:

Appearance

You may not be able to do much about a bulbous abdomen or eyes that cross, but you can circumvent these disabilities by packaging them properly.

If you have buttons off your jacket and holes in your socks, you will have no confidence in yourself. When you see a customer and, instead of listening to you, he is surveying an egg-stain on your tie, you will lose his attention and consequently the sale. You will also lose the thread of your own sales talk – for there is nothing more unnerving.

At the other extreme, do not wave your well-scrubbed and immaculate appearance as if you have stepped from a band-box. Be inconspicuously smart, so that you can forget what you look like and concentrate upon the business in hand.

An American firm, selling soft drinks, decided to dress its salesmen in black shorts and red socks. Quite apart from the salesmen themselves, who threatened strike action, the whole idea was disastrous. Instead of drawing attention to the virtues of their product, the salesmen drew ribald guffaws upon themselves. They would be remembered – but for the wrong reasons.

Clothing should thus be discreet. If the suit is patterned, the tie should be plain. Don't sport a bowler above a tweed suit. Don't wear any accessories that scream out loud. Some firms even discourage their salesmen from wearing tie-pins or rings that dazzle.

Make a quick check of your going-out attire. Are your trousers pressed? Has last night's soup left its mark on the lapel? Are your shoes clean? Is your shirt collar clean and unfrayed?

All these dress details may seem frivolous. But they are enormously influential in getting a selling job. For a salesman has to be spruce – or he doesn't get the order.

Similarly, he will find that the breaks come more easily if he hasn't got five o'clock shadow at ten in the morning, if his hair doesn't resemble an untrimmed hedge, and if his nails haven't been gnawed to the bone.

These personal details will influence any employer. But they are vital for anyone picking a sales team, whose dapper and well-kept appearance is part of the company image.

It is also quite a drawback if you slump into a chair like an exhausted question-mark, or drag your feet across the floor. Posture and a vigorous bearing betray, it is thought, the alert and energetic mind. The bleary eye hints at the night before. Too many chins may mean over-indulgence.

But don't despair if your features and general shape are never likely to land you a film contract. It is the man who makes the most of what he's got who will win in the end. [The important factor is pride in self-presentation.]

Before a customer can hang upon your persuasive words, he must feel that the man behind them is worth knowing. And the salesman, any more than an actor, should not make a public appearance that is slovenly, ill-groomed, and in any way distasteful.

Speech

The second ingredient in your personal image is the way you talk. Attention to grooming may get you

through a difficult door. But you'll soon be ejected if the prospect can't understand a word you say.

This has nothing to do with your natural accent. It is useless to cultivate what you consider to be a public-school, Queen's-English tone, if you weren't born with it. [However diligently you imitate, say, George Sanders, you will always make a slip and it will always sound artificial.]

Many salesmen make this mistake. They even forget that the vast majority of their customers have the same background as themselves. They will distrust anyone who attempts to put on airs, to make himself superior, to blind them with half-understood poly-syllables. Selling is at its best when two men meet on the same level.

So don't eliminate those vowels and speech-rhythms that show you come from Wolverhampton, or Glasgow, or Leeds. They are no drawback. Even if you are not a salesman in your own native territory, there is very little prejudice left against a regional accent. It can be positively helpful, by giving colour and variety to your conversation.

No, the criterion must be – can you be understood? Most people have, at one time or another, listened to their own voices on a tape-recorder. It can be a stunning experience. For no one can tell how his voice sounds to others by listening to himself.

The first thing to do is to play back to yourself some of your unrehearsed talk. Listen to it coldly, as if you were an outsider, and look for the following faults:

1. Consonants that are not given their full value. This is very common amongst Londoners, and Bernard

Shaw's Eliza Doolittle may be an exceptional case – but he wrote a splendid play about correcting her.

2. Do you drop your voice at the end of a sentence?
3. Are your vowels slack, so that, for instance, 'slum' can be confused with 'slam' and 'week' with 'wick'?
4. Do you have irritating mannerisms – such as a nervous giggle, or heavy breathing, or a toothy lisp?
5. Is the pitch monotonously low, or piercingly high?
6. Have you a tendency to stutter at moments of stress?
7. Has your voice resonance, which gives an encouraging warmth to what you say?

You may find that you have many, even all, of these speech vices. They can all be corrected. With perseverance and practice, you can improve your voice on your own. There are also teachers who can put you through an improvement course.

These weaknesses impair your communication. Having achieved lucidity, however, you can also work to make your voice an instrument of a relaxed and sociable personality.

Any sign of nervous strain in your voice will handicap your selling. The thought immediately comes to the customer's mind – if he's worried about the product, why should I buy it? He transfers your own diffidence, or over-enthusiasm, as a criticism of the goods you are selling.

Once you have mastered the art of speaking clearly, you can introduce more subtle variations. You can ring the changes on volume and pitch to emphasise a point. You can pause to highlight your argument.

You can also listen on the radio to practised talkers

– an invaluable guide to voice techniques. If the B.B.C. is repeating Max Beerbohm, or Alistair Cooke is giving his American news-letter, make a point of tuning in. They are instrumentalists of the voice, and can be studied just as an actor will listen to Gielgud or a pianist to Rubinstein.

Courtesy

Maybe you are given to shouting ‘belt up!’ to the old woman, or trampling pensioners under foot for a seat in the bus, or yelling at learner-drivers. If these arrogant habits have a dire hold on you, you can stop reading straight away. You will never make a successful salesman.

A salesman must be well-mannered. And politeness, unfortunately, cannot merely be acquired as a professional gimmick. You are stuck with it throughout your working and your leisure hours.

Imagine – or find – a scrupulously honest friend. Picture yourself in his eyes. You may uncover many characteristics that are wholly expendable. Such as:

1. You may be a bad listener. This is a fault that afflicts many salesmen. They are so full of their own fascinating exposition that they don’t allow the other fellow to get a word in. He may have something quite pertinent to say, and, by answering him, you are helping your sale. But, even if he is talking out of the back of his neck, you must allow him to do so. Suffer fools gladly.

2. You may have a penchant for the would-be funny story. If so, suppress it. The latest sex or latrine joke that may go down well with bibulous pals at closing time is a dead loss anywhere else. Nothing puts off a

comparative stranger more easily than to have to listen to a sniggering joke – especially if it is longer than thirty seconds. A surprising number of people disapprove of vulgarity. So play safe – and don't tell it. The nudging 'have you heard this one?' is often considered a convenient ice-breaker. But it fails nine times out of ten. And few salesmen are canny enough to guess which is the tenth time.

3. You can't shake hands properly. This may seem a minute detail – but how often have you judged a man by his grip? If he mangles your hand, you don't want to repeat the dose. If he extends limp fingers, you are not much impressed with his personality. If he pumps you up and down as if milking a reluctant cow, you find it effusive. There is a way to shake hands which makes contact and shows friendship. This half-way clasp should be perfected.

4. You have odd, and unsuspected, foibles that can drive strangers up the wall. Some can't stand still without clutching a piece of furniture. Some swallow hard, their Adam's apples like yo-yos. Some drum with their fingers on anything handy. Some sit on the edge of a chair as if awaiting electrocution. These idiosyncrasies are not always apparent. But they can all be eliminated.

5. You smoke, unbidden. Remember that when you enter a prospect's office, store, or home, you are his guest. He may be allergic to cigarettes. He may be worried about your burning his carpet. If he invites you to join him in a weed, you may accept. Otherwise, restrain yourself until you get outside.

Most of these intrusive quirks are unconscious. Only

a best friend can tell you about them, or a sudden bout of self-analysis. They are all aspects of bad manners and inner unease.

It is easy, for example, to be disrespectful to your colleagues or to your company – when you are out of earshot. But put yourself in the place of a listener. His private reaction will be: ‘Well, if he can talk like that about his associates behind their back, I wonder what he will say about me?’

That listener is a customer. He can give you business. He can be annoyed, or suspicious, or affronted. It is up to you to keep him on your side.

Personality

The sum of appearance and voice and manners is the outer expression of your personality. Many believe that they have inherited one of these, like blue eyes or a mole, and nothing can be done to change it. This is not so. [A personality can be shaped, and it can be drastically amended, when the will to do it is there.]

Take intelligence. Your I.Q. is not a static thing. It may grow in puberty, and decline with the years. Be honest about it. If your mental resources are not of the highest – and there is no shame in acknowledging it – then you will not be happy at a selling job that demands intellectual agility. Specialty selling may not be for you. Many failures, and much misery, amongst salesmen is caused by their faulty estimate of their own powers.

Other personality traits can be learned, or improved. For instance:

1. *Reliability*. If you are one of those who says, ‘I’ll let you know’, and then forgets all about it, you will find this an enormous drawback as a salesman. A

customer may ask you to expedite a delivery, to send him company literature, to call again in ten days' time. He will not forgive or forget if you break your promise. By finding that you keep your word, he will learn to trust you.

2. *Tact*. There's an old ethical problem often trotted out on television soap-operas. Should a doctor tell a patient that he is soon to die? Whatever the absolute rights and wrongs of that one, a good salesman would never tell. He does not tell a buyer, who is suffering from a hangover: 'You look terrible today.' He does not officiously correct other people's mistakes. He lets the other man have his say – if only because he will learn something about him that will come in useful later in the interview.

Those who tactlessly hurt the feelings of others are generally wrapped up in their own egos. They do not like other people. Another symptom is that they cannot remember names. Many people will remark: 'I'm so sorry. I have an awful memory for names', when they obviously can't tell you from Cholmondeley. They are, in fact, confessing to their own self-absorption. They'll recite quite easily the names of their girl-friends. They just don't care enough about the customer to remember who he is. And said customer is rightfully insulted.

3. *Temper*. Flying off the handle is considered quite a virtue in some quarters. It is considered to show a man impatient of vices and open in his dealings. It does no such thing for a salesman. However affectionate you feel towards your fellows, there is no doubt that many of them can infuriate. But once you lose control of yourself, you've lost a customer.

Similarly, do not argue. It may be galling to listen to a man who insists that Stalin isn't dead but just biding his time for a comeback, or that more people go to the cinema now than a decade ago. But make noncommittal grunts, or, if your conscience will stretch to it, faintly concur and try and change the subject. No one likes to be contradicted. If you can prove that they are wrong, also refrain. You'll only make an enemy. And you are not in selling to do that.

There are various aspects of this diplomacy business. Don't chip in, if a man is a slow talker, and finish his sentences for him. Laugh at his jokes – even if you've heard them since you were in short pants. If he says he's won twenty pounds on the pools, don't tell him you won the jackpot on the treble chance.

They are all offshoots from the same principle. Put yourself in the other man's shoes, so that you don't make the mistake of stepping on them.

Just as a cripple can learn to use substitute limbs, so can you surmount your personality obstacles. You can also learn to use words with more precision – so that they express more exactly and vividly your sales story. You can train yourself to be more imaginative, so that, for example, you remember that one customer likes fruit-drops and you ensure that you have some in your pocket when you call.

No one, unless limbering up to be a saint, will get close to personal perfection. But, before he goes on to acquire the professional skills of selling, a salesman would do well to pause and ask himself four basic questions:

1. Can my appearance be faulted?

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2. Can I express myself clearly?
3. Will my manners make me acceptable anywhere?
4. Do I like the human race?

There must be a positive answer to each part of this self-quiz. If you are doubtful about any, you may grub along as a salesman. But your feet will be groping the bottom rungs of the ladder. Eventually, you will fall off.

CHAPTER THREE

It is now assumed that you have given a fine glitter to your personality and you are ready to deploy it as a salesman. Before delving into the various selling procedures, there is one paramount mastery you must acquire. You must know your product.

Does this seem obvious? Maybe it is – but the lack of product knowledge is the chief deficiency amongst salesmen. They know their jobs in a vacuum. Put yourself in the buyer's position. He is being asked to pay cash for, perhaps, a costly piece of equipment, or for a bulk consignment of consumer goods for his shelves.

He is in two minds. He will almost certainly have questions to ask which are special to his own circumstances. No amount of smooth talk will disguise the fact that the salesman doesn't know the answers.

For example, you may be selling V.H.F. radios with a built-in aerial. The customer may want to know the improvement in reception if he rigged up an outdoor aerial – and if this was practicable with your instrument.

He may be thinking of moving house to another district on a different electric system – and wonders if your set could still operate there.

All these questions have one basis. Every prospective buyer has his own individual worries and problems. The salesman's object is not to sell him a radio. It is to solve the prospect's problem. The sale is incidental to the solution.

Think of it as if you were a doctor confronted with a sick man. You don't stuff him with the handiest bottle of pills. You diagnose the nature of his malady, and prescribe the medicine that will effect a cure. You can't sell a man anything that does not bring him benefit. At least, you may bring it off once, but you will have made an enemy. Enemies won't buy from you again – and neither will their acquaintances.

There is a very good reason for this emphasis on product knowledge. In practically every branch of industry, there are more brand names, and thus more competition, than ever before. Thirty years ago, a housewife had a simple choice of detergent; there were two national brand leaders, way ahead of their lesser rivals. Now she is influenced hither and thither by six or seven brands. One is kind to the hands, another contains more soap-powder, yet another claims to suit the demands of washing-machines, and so on.

Each detergent is supported by millions of advertising money, special offers, and price cuts. How is the bemused shopkeeper to distinguish between them? He may have his business in a poor rural area, where spin-driers are as rare as Cadillacs. He may be in a district where the water supply is very hard. He may

have little display space in his shop to draw proper attention to a premium offer, like a free hankie with every packet.

The salesman's job is to listen to these difficulties, and not bludgeon the customer into silence. Then he can point out those virtues of his own detergent that answer the problems. Maybe it lathers in cold water full of chalk. Maybe it whizzes round a washing-machine like a dose of salts.

What is quite fruitless is to sell a detergent that, say, makes hands soft and beautiful in an area where the housewife is helping on the land, digging potatoes, or carting coal. A desire to outshine Lady Lewisham is not likely to keep her awake at nights.

The same lesson applies to practically every product you care to mention. Doctors complain that drugs are now so numerous that they need proper explanation of their advantages. Travel is booming – and the customer needs to be told the benefits of group travel, the pros of the Italian Riviera and the cons of the Costa Brava. If he is a solitary cove with a hatred of beer, he won't relish being dispatched on a coach tour of the Rhineland.

It is this proliferation of products and services that makes thorough knowledge indispensable for the successful salesman. He cannot rely on his prospects having read the advertising or the descriptions on the label. These may be supports for his selling, but he has to build on the framework.

Earlier on, we stressed the importance of fitting in to the right selling groove. This can now be extended. If you find a job and do not trouble to learn all you can

about your company and its product, you will never be satisfied in it.

The enthusiasm of a salesman is largely generated by his mastery of the product. You have all met the man with a curious and outlandish passion. For spiders, perhaps, or Australian postage-stamps. He is eager to impart his store of information. He may easily end by firing you with his own enthusiasm. He is anxious to put you wise about a spider's essential splendour and nobility, because he is confident that he can prove it.

Whatever you are selling – from cheese to chimney-stacks – you must cultivate your knowledge of it. Even those products that seem superficially dull and straightforward have their interest. Learn and master the manufacturing techniques involved. Find out all you can about its previous development. Goya perfume, for instance, was first made in a backyard shed in Brighton. A famous brand of toffee was first concocted in error by a lady who left a pot simmering too long over the stove.

If you are selling leather goods, find out more about the properties and constant experiment associated with the material. If your line is cornflakes, examine why its energy-giving claims have grown up.

Nothing fights boredom and staleness more convincingly than knowledge. It imparts confidence, and the assurance that you can meet any quibbles and expos-
tulations from clients.

Another thing is certain. If you have your sights set on promotion, you won't make progress in your chosen company if you show only half-hearted interest in what it produces. There is room at the top – but only for

those who have proved their close involvement with the company.

There are other practical reasons for knowing your product:

1. You can still all doubts. If you are not sure of *any* aspect of the product, you will frequently fail. A customer may have shown interest, and you might have satisfactorily dealt with all his questions. Until, suddenly, he jumps in with: 'Can this part be replaced as a spare if it goes wrong?' or 'Is there any advertising for this in our local paper?' You fumble, hum-and-hah, and generally grope for a response. The prospect's confidence in you has shrunk like the morning mist, and you won't be able to restore it.

2. You can sell quality goods that have no price advantage. Here, comprehensive product knowledge is the chief selling factor. Suppose that you are dealing with an electric heating appliance that costs a pound more than your nearest rival. That extra pound is going to gnaw and nibble at the customer. He will want to know what he is getting that is so superior that you want him to dip deeper into his pocket. He will be in a highly questioning mood, and if you are not confident of your facts you will slink away without a sale.

3. You can tailor your product more exactly to the customer's needs. You may be selling a line of goods in different price ranges. Take air-conditioning, for instance. One unit may be fine for a room twelve feet square, but would be utterly useless in a hotel dining-room. The customer will expect you to answer his own special problem, and not to generalize vaguely about

clean air or the principles of extraction. Unless you know every permutation of use to which your product can be put, you cannot satisfy special cases. And most cases in selling, to one degree or another, are special.

4. You can indicate, in simple terms, unique qualities in your product. With the complication of goods and processes mentioned above, there has come an attendant need for explanation. Just looking at a television set won't indicate its advantages over another. One encyclopaedia will look very like another, to the inexperienced eye. It is up to the salesman to visualize and interpret his own product to the layman. And, in a very real sense, most customers are laymen. They cannot understand intricate technical claims that bandy special terms about, like resistances or rotary actions or the like. Technicalities have to be expressed in language they *can* understand, and aspects of the product they might overlook drawn to their attention.

5. You can impart your knowledge to the retailer. If your selling is mainly with stores, you must remember that you are not reaching the ultimate customer. You are selling to a man, who also has to sell. Inevitably, he will not have your own grounding in the product. Whatever he transmits to his own customers will be a less compelling account of the product. But, if you have completely convinced him in the first place, he will be in a far better position to convey your sales story at one remove. If he moves the goods from his shelves, you will be far more welcome when you call back for a repeat order.

Many companies are highly aware of this need to enlist the retailer and wholesaler on their side. Many

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have specialist merchandising salesmen to help them. They also provide facilities for dealers to learn about their products by running training courses for them at the factory; this especially applies with those consumer durables, like kitchen appliances, that need after-sales service.

Companies, too, help their own salesmen by making films about their products, by issuing well-produced house journals that effect a link between client and supplier, by sending out lucid bulletins about developments in the firm, and by organizing contests for retailers, prizes usually going to those that show increased sales of the company's products.

But the burden of conviction is finally carried by the individual salesman. He may have these company aids to support him, but he will make sales by his own perfect product knowledge, filtered through an engaging personality.

WHAT THE CUSTOMER WANTS

The customer's demands are changing fast. We have talked so far in terms of the small individual, buying for himself or for one or two businesses that he controls. This type of prospect still outnumbers the rest.

But, with take-overs rampant, with the growth of supermarkets and the concentration of ownership amongst multiple stores, many of the most rewarding outlets for your goods are in the hands of a single buyer, or a buying committee. These men, or women, are trained not merely in the demands of their own companies, but they know a great deal about your product.

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They will question you more precisely. After all, they are judged by their own skill in buying, and they acquire goods in such quantities that they will not be tolerated if they make many mistakes.

A recent survey of buyers for grocery chains showed that their chief complaint against salesmen was a tendency to refer any knotty point back to head office. They preferred to deal with representatives who could make a decision on the spot and give clear-cut answers.

A salesman cannot be decisive if he has gaping holes in his product knowledge. And he cannot convince a buyer whose job it is to examine the whole range of products in his field. One group of stores, for instance, employs a buyer for all furnishing fabrics. He has been in this position for more than five years. He reads all the appropriate trade journals, and keeps constantly up-to-date with innovations in this particular industry.

He just cannot be kidded along. He can arrange for tests for fabrics. He knows what they are worth. This type of buyer is increasing in power and frequency. To make a success of selling, your product knowledge must match his.

DEFINING YOUR TERMS

Regrettably, knowing your product may still not bring home the bacon. You have to transmute this knowledge into terms the customer can understand, and into terms of his needs.

For example, you may know the capacity of a cistern down to the fraction of a cubic inch – but the resultant figure is not likely to win sales and influence people.

However, if you say that it holds heat longer than any other, or that it provides enough hot water for a family of five, you will arouse interest. Because you are talking in terms of the customer's needs.

No one wants a steam-iron because it has steam in it. It is wanted because it gives a finished look to the pillow-case or a pair of trousers. If an appliance has low running costs, do not say that it is 'more economical to operate.' Come out boldly, and truthfully, with the example of Mrs. Blenkinsop down the road who found that this machine was saving her ten bob a week.

Generalization will rarely get you anywhere. The concrete example has the impact. A good insurance man will point out the savings in income tax by taking out a policy with his company; he will not stress how much it will *cost* the customer, but how much it will *save* him.

In the same way, if your product knowledge is pluperfect, you can always turn it to the advantage of the customer. If you are selling carpets, you can indicate to a housewife with a small drawing-room that wall-to-wall carpeting adds to the room's appearance of size. If you are selling fertilizer, you can explain to a farmer how it would make his poorer land profitable – for those are the acres that worry him.

Product knowledge must be used all the time as a reservoir, from which the salesman can extract just the right amount to please the customer. Too many high-falutin' data – and the client is swamped. Too little, and too irrelevant – and the customer doesn't connect the product with his own problem at all.

ESSENTIAL BAGGAGE

There is nothing, absolutely nothing, about his company and its products that the salesman should not know, or find out. Thus armed, he can cope with every conversational obstacle thrown in his path. These basic facts can be divided as follows:

1. *Company background.* He should know when the firm was founded (longevity itself is a confidence-building selling point), and all its successes and tribulations thereafter. [Who are its directors, and where did they come from? What is the name of the Chairman? How, and when, did it expand? What are the names of the principal executives in other departments?]

Familiarity with the company's history gives depth to the salesman's presentation of the product. It gives him some of the team-spirit if he knows about the other members of the company, past and present. It gives a helpful continuity to older clients of the company, who may have known many of the salesman's predecessors or colleagues.

Of course, a firm's name can be an open-sesame, if it is well-known and long-established. But, whatever its size and age, the salesman should know how it is financed, what its profits were over previous years, what rate of wages is paid to the men on the factory floor, if the raw materials for the product come from abroad or Britain, what sort of machines are used in the manufacturing process, and so on.

All this information is not to be trotted out at the drop of a hat.] It is there, for the salesman to draw upon when required. If his company is comparatively new,

for example, it helps a customer to know that it has had a convincing period of solvency and high profits, that it hasn't suffered from a strike for years, or that the Managing Director was made an M.B.E. by the Queen last year.

Equally, a salesman selling food will know of the meticulous care taken to maintain quality in tin or package, of the careful selection of ingredients. A leading manufacturer of chicken paste, for example, issues a standing invitation to all their customers to drop in on their factory unannounced. They can there see the fowls, handsomely fed, awaiting their doom in a jar. The salesman can be a substitute for this visitation. He can vividly recreate the high production standards of his company.

A client's confidence in a salesman can almost be measured by that salesman's awareness of all aspects of his company. It declines in the same ratio.

2. *Conditions of sale.* The salesman may collect cash for his sale, or, more usually, he will invoice the customer who will eventually receive a request for payment from the firm's accounts department. He must be thoroughly familiar with this system, know when and how credit can be granted, be primed on all manner of discounts and special terms.

He must know the trading policy of his company. Does it believe in retail price maintenance? Does it use distribution agencies in some parts of the country? Does it believe in local selling drives, supported by TV and Press advertising in the region?

Connected with these administrative policies is the crucial matter of delivery. If the salesman doesn't carry

the product with him – and this would be rather dicey in the case of a bull-dozer, for instance – he will be faced, after a successful sale, with naming a day for delivery.

If he is not closely familiar with the production pattern, he may easily sell a red machine and discover later that the factory has stopped turning it out in that colour. He then has to go back to the customer, and suggest a blue, or a yellow, or whatever, as a replacement. This is a blatant sign of incompetence – and it has happened frequently.

He must know how quickly the dispatch department can get the goods to the customer. Maybe there is some urgent reason for receiving them on a certain day. The salesman will blandly promise their arrival, crossing his heart and hoping to die. If they do not come, it will be another death of a salesman so far as that customer is concerned. Promises must be honestly kept, for it is no good the salesman coming back and blaming someone else in the company for slackness. He is the company to outsiders, and irritation will not be assuaged by apologies.

3. *Varieties of product use.* This can best be illustrated by examples. Suppose you are selling a portable ice-maker. You can explain that the ice can be dropped in to the pre-dinner cocktail, or crushed into the post-dinner liqueur. But your customer may be teetotal. So you explain that a sprinkling of ice can give zest to lettuce, or that the container can hold a chocolate-ice cake, or any of a dozen other non-alcoholic purposes.

Similarly, you can expatiate upon the functions of a typewriter in terms of customer need. He may appreciate the clarity, or the speed, or the noiselessness, or the

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portable size. Always know every benefit of your product so that you can highlight the one which most suits the situation of your customer, bringing in the others as subordinate selling factors.

Always keep the prospect's viewpoint at the forefront of your mind. Then you can put the emphasis of the sale correctly, and avoid bewildering him with technical expertise that may fascinate the pundit but will befuddle, and scare, the layman.

HOW TO GET THE FACTS

Many companies produce a sales manual as a reference book for their experienced salesmen, and as a primer for new recruits. The manual should contain everything a canny salesman ought to know. It has those matters we have discussed earlier on – company history, product details, and the administrative system – as well as the nutshell of the sales lore we are broaching later. It often comes as a loose-leaf booklet, so that changes in policy or product can be easily incorporated in it.

With reference to the special needs of the company, it can help a salesman to plan his working time so that the minimum is wasted, and to open up new outlets. It should, from past experience, tabulate the kind of objections he is liable to meet from customers, and it will work out a general sales sequence which has also been proven by other salesmen in the company.

The object of a good manual is to express as precisely as possible a salesman's relationship to his company, and what is expected of him. Thus it may easily lay

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down rules for using your company-provided car, claiming expenses, or asking for a holiday.

This, in fact, is your primary source of working information. It is not intended that you should carry it around with you – although many do – but that you should refer to it as a refresher or for guidance.

You can also supplement your knowledge by reading. There are many tomes on salesmanship, mostly turgid but most, too, having something that will add to your efficiency and tighten your skill. The kindred selling crafts of advertising and public relations are also much theorized about, and you should be familiar with their drift. It is fair to expect, too, that you have a nodding acquaintance with elementary economics and the ramifications of business practices.

All this can be picked up by a selective survey of the shelves at your local library. The more interest you can summon, the more absorbing your job will become. It gains in significance, as soon as you can see it as part of an intricate whole.

To revert to where we started, product knowledge, too, can be set in a wider context, and be enhanced thereby. You can learn by heart how a particular precision-tool works, but you will be far more effective if you have a grasp of the engineering principles behind it.

So, if you are dealing in foodstuffs, know something of diet, calories and proteins, and culinary variations. If you sell to farmers, mug up on livestock. If your line is a duplicating machine, learn how paper is made.

A salesman's job is drudgery only to those that make it so. Unless he is infected with curiosity, liking to trace

mysteries down to their source, he will settle into a groove. That groove will become a grave. And he will have dug it himself.

CHAPTER FOUR

ENTERPRISE is the heart of the salesman's job. One aspect of this pioneering spirit is the opening of new accounts. It varies in importance with the goods he is selling, but for any salesman who is not a mere order-taker – and many who work for wholesalers are just this – the discovery of outlets for his merchandise is essential. In order to increase his list of customers, he has to find prospects first.

A prospect is virgin territory. If the salesman can turn him into a customer, then he has transformed barren land into a gold-mine.

Selection of prospects should be undertaken with your product in view. Trade directories are a help here, of course, if the goods have obvious attractions for estate agents, or ironmongers, for example. But much valuable time can be wasted by approaching prospects whose interest in your product will be minimal or non-existent.

For instance, if you are selling books of popular science, you are unlikely to enthuse old-age pensioners. Bachelors and spinsters will rarely be in a condition to take an active interest in perambulators.

With your product in mind, however, any salesman can draw up a specification list for a prospect. Many

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grocers, for instance, will stock nylons for laddered customers. Some public houses provide ice-cream or coffee. By using imagination, and keeping your eyes skinned, you can expand the number of your retail outlets.

'Cold canvass' is the professional term for this kind of selling. It does not entirely imply that you are going from door to door, disturbing householders – although this may be a part of it, for insurance men or some consumer durables. It also applies to those selling to the professions or retailers. Quite apart from the fact that always, somewhere, a possible customer has escaped your net, there is constant change as people move from area to area. Every newcomer must be treated as a prospect.

We have already seen that the highest rewards in selling go to the specialty salesman. And he is the man who does most cold-canvassing. He may be selling office equipment, for example. In general, he will not get repeat orders after a successful sale. He must start from scratch, day after day, with prospects so far unapproached.

So, having mastered your product, the first thing to do is to list every kind of prospect to whom it may appeal – and eliminate all those who will have little need for it. Then conduct your own private census in your area, using the information at town halls and public libraries, to name those prospects. Aim always for a list that would keep you busy for a fortnight if you had the time to contact them all, without seeing your familiar buyers.

Also, set yourself a target of so many new prospects a

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week. This, again, will vary according to your product, but you must remember the wastage of regular customers. It is no good seeing one prospect for every customer you lose. However skilfully you present your sales story, you cannot hope to convince every one you see. Amongst even top-ranking specialty salesmen, a ratio of two successes to eight calls is high.

Most salesmen have a percentage of regular calls they must make. Fit your prospects into this pattern of calls so that you know, having seen old Jones again in one street, you can try the unknown Brown round the corner. This sort of pre-week planning is vital. It saves you wandering around aimlessly, with time on your hands. It also enables you to phone for an appointment with your prospect, so that your arrival unannounced does not seem to him offhand and casual and you do not find him engaged or out or sick.

Planning in advance will also enable you to find out something about your prospect before you see him. This is always helpful. If you know that he belongs to the local golf club, or has three children, or lives in a house where Queen Elizabeth slept – all these make conversational gambits. They give the prospect a feeling that you are taking an interest in him as a person, not as a source of the annual bonus.

This careful listing of prospects should also not overlook another class of customer – the one who has previously bought from your company, but maybe in small quantities many years before. He may have been dissatisfied with some aspect of the product, or may have suffered from some administrative lapse which was not your fault. If it was a minor failure you may be

able to set it right, and reinstate him among your regular clients. A former customer, in fact, may be a most promising prospect.

How should you set about making a survey of prospects? The diversity of products makes it impossible to lay down hard-and-fast rules. But, as an indication, let us assume that you are selling insurance. Here are some of the things you can watch for:

1. Births and marriages in the local Press.
2. News of promotions and changes of job among executives.
3. Houses changing hands, or being newly occupied.
4. Bequests of money.
5. Expansion of small businesses.
6. School-leavers taking their first jobs.
7. Membership of reputable clubs in the area.
8. Board appointments of companies.

You can amuse yourselves by adding to this list – and then pruning it to those who are priority prospects. Any in these categories may need insurance protection, either as new accounts or by increasing their previous cover. They can all mean business for you – if you mean business, too.

There are other ways of finding possible clients. When you have established good and friendly relations with one customer, it is easy to ask him if he knows anyone else who might be interested in your product. So long as he is satisfied with it, he won't demur at telling you a few names and addresses. In fact, he will feel he is doing the others a favour.

Other salesmen, in non-competitive fields, may also help. Dog may eat dog in many branches of activity, ✓

but there is no reason at all for a salesman in, say, brief-cases, to be stand-offish and secretive with a salesman of garden furniture. They may have some customers in common, but the failure of one has nothing to do with the success of the other. Accordingly, they can pool their knowledge of the territory to mutual advantage.

Whatever your job, it is always a good idea to keep on good terms with your bank manager. In a small urban or largely rural area, he will certainly be at the nerve centre of all sizeable business deals. Where there is no reason for secrecy, and no etiquette involved, he can tell you about developments that provide chances for your product. But don't push your luck in this direction. The aggressive 'who's-come-into-the-money' approach is not the best way to get results.

COLD CANVASS

However you assemble your list of prospects, there comes the fateful hour when you have to announce your presence to them. This process of cold canvassing deserves more attention and emphasis. It is the only sure way for a salesman to make more money. The logic behind it is simple. Just as you will get more double-tops at darts for a hundred throws than twenty, so you will take more orders at selling if you can increase your rate of calling on prospects.

This single aspect sorts out the good salesman from the mediocre and the lackadaisical. It is a test of his knowledge and skill, which combine to give a firm foundation to his self-confidence.

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For most of the time, the salesman will know nothing about his prospect except his name – and sometimes not even that. He may have only the yaguest notion that the person fills the bill for his product.

But it is the only way to make the best of your territory. Still keeping in mind that you don't want to waste valuable time, it often happens that you will be up-to-date with your regular calls and have approached the good prospects in your area. What do you do then? You spend an hour or so calling on the borderline prospects – the shop that *might* be interested but only just, the office manager who *might* conceivably be in need of a new piece of equipment.

This is cold canvass at its most frigid. It means calling, unheralded, upon a man or woman who wants to see you like they want a hole in the head. You haven't primed them by letter or telephone, and you must take the risk of a door slammed before you open your mouth or a supercilious sneer from a secretary.

It is sometimes possible, of course, to phone first – and this should be done whenever convenient. But make a point of eventually phoning *everyone* who may need your product, and keep a note of the names and addresses of those you call and whether they grant you an interview or not.

But, in cold canvassing, do not take a telephone refusal lying down. Demur as politely as you can, without infuriating the prospect to such an extent that he slams the receiver on you.

Many people, when they hear a brief description of your product, will say 'no' over the phone. It is not so simple to say 'no' when they are face to face with the

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salesman. Many products, too, can only be sold personally. In fact, customers will not know that they need them until their value is demonstrated.

Anyone will know whether he needs a tablet of soap. But he will not necessarily be a regular consumer of bath-salts, and the thought may not have occurred to him until you plant it. Over the phone, his immediate reaction, expressed or not, will be 'I've never had bath salts – so why should I start now?'

This is not the end of your cold canvass. It is the beginning. It is now your job to convince him – or, more probably, her – that she needs bath-salts. And then to convert that need into a want – and an order for you. ✓

KEEPING TABS ON PROSPECTS

Every salesman should keep a simple card-index system that has one division for customers and another for prospects. The prospect file will, if he is at all alert, be replenished week by week, as the salesman gets information from his various sources of possible clients.

Prospects' cards will be transferred to the customers' file when appropriate. In this way, the salesman can keep a constant check on the number of regular buyers. If the number is not growing, he won't be able to deceive himself – for the thinning file will prove that he is just not working hard enough.

Similarly, if the prospect file begins to show a decrepit and grubby handful of cards, with few new additions, the salesman knows two things. That he is not turning a

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fair share of prospects into customers, and that he is not finding new prospects fast enough.

If both files are in this run-down condition, then he'd better think about changing his job. Or his sales director will certainly change it for him.

There should be room on these individual cards for background information. Anything from age to habits that the salesman knows about the name on the card should be included, as well as, for customers, the date of the last call and any promise he has made about the next one.

This card system, which takes only a few minutes at the end of the day to keep up to date, is very valuable for jogging the memory. It should be consulted every morning before the salesman leaves home, so that he is fully armed with all the details he can muster about the people he is planning to see during the day.

To conclude this section on a note that may be doleful or buoyant according to your temperament, a salesman can never have enough prospects. If he doesn't know where to call next, he is not doing his job properly.

Finding one customer from twenty prospects is one sale he would not otherwise make.

CHAPTER FIVE

So far we have analysed the attitudes and aptitudes of the salesman. Now we swivel the spotlight to the other fellow in the transaction, the one who buys.

The customer will not buy unless he wants your

product. In order to make him want it, you have to learn to understand his motives, to interpret his moods, and get under the skin of his outer personality to the probable thought processes beneath.

This may sound a tall order in the space of a short encounter. But practice helps, and so does your own inclination to put yourself in his place. Some experts call this the 'you' appeal, and it is as good a description as any.

It means that, as soon as you have been introduced to a prospect, you consider his reactions before your own. Many think that selling consists of unloading your wares onto people who later regret their foolishness. Nothing could be further from the truth. You will only sell well if you genuinely desire to serve them, and have no doubt that your product will benefit them.

Because people are different, a salesman who perfects an unvarying speech and unleashes it on all and sundry is doomed to failure. Consider a moment your own circle of friends and relations. Would you describe, say, a film you had seen in exactly the same words to your mother, your kid brother, your girl friend, or your doctor? Of course not. You would trim your vocabulary to suit your listener. It is courtesy to do so, for most people are embarrassed if someone uses portmanteau words they cannot understand or, alternatively, speaks in monosyllables as if they were backward ten-year-olds.

Thus a salesman has to study people, as well as like them. Usually, one thing follows from the other. If a man seems expansive and ready to treat everyone in the bar, an argument that your product will save him five shillings a week won't cut much ice. But it might work

wonders with the man who carries his small change around in a purse.

These rough-and-ready character assessments have to be made. Most people who are not salesmen sum up their fellows in this way. They soon become an unconscious part of your selling, so that you can step into an office and tell from its fastidious decoration, for example, that its occupant is sophisticated, or from a copy of the 'Mirror' in the waste-paper basket that he's somewhat more raucous. Clues to people's temperament lie all around them.

Their opinions should be approached more warily. If he believes that foreigners are a bunch of idle wine-bibbers, do not tangle with him. If he opines that Chelsea will win the Cup, stifle your disagreement. Most of us have inherited a host of odd views, amounting to prejudices. They cannot be decried, or argued against. The salesman who brashly pontificates about politics, or lack of moral fibre in the younger generation, or the weather, is a bad salesman. He should listen – and be non-committal if the talk gets too controversial.

It's quite easy to control your reactions when you realize one thing. A man's background and habits cannot be changed in an hour – and that is as long as you will have with him.

What you can do, of course, is take advantage of those traits that help your case. If the prospect considers the local council is squandering the rate-payers' money, he will be open to a suggestion that your product will save some of his own. If he complains that he is fed up with gardening, this may give you a lead, if your product is somehow relaxing or soothing.

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And what you can always do is to offer praise or sympathy when appropriate. This is never rejected, as long as it is not sycophantic and fulsome. Comment on the efficiency of a man's secretary; praise the new picture on the wall; commiserate with him if he's been on a holiday for a fortnight and it rained every day. Show, in fact, that you have his interests in mind.

In this way, by a little applied psychology, you can put yourself in the position to guess at the prospect's main motive for buying your product. Having done that, you can make it a prominent factor in your sales presentation.

REASONS FOR BUYING

There are nearly as many motives for people buying things as there are things to buy. Rarely, in any case, will there be a single reason. It will be mixed with others, and the ideal salesman will try to make use of as many as he can during his interview.

Some of the most potent reasons for buying are:

1. *Profit.* Few people will turn down a chance for making money, and salesmen who do business with wholesalers and retailers will have a strong case if they can convince the prospect that he will sell so much of their product that his profits will soar. They will help him to make money.

There is another side to the coin, however. You may also be able to help in saving money. A telephone switchboard might save salaries and cut down on phone bills. Office typing-paper may be cheaper than its competitors, and effect a big saving in the cost of

stationery for a large organization. A photo-copier might save many man-hours, and thus money, for a firm that sends out a lot of standard letters and literature.

Financial gain can be assumed for many products. Canteen equipment that will improve the quality of factory meals will also help to increase production, and thus profits. The same gain is claimed for piped music in offices and workshops. You are reading this book in order to find out about the career of selling – and one of your main motives is money.

But do not force this motive to breaking-point. One salesman, obviously at his last gasp, said that a television set would save money – because it could be watched in the dark, with the electric lights switched off. This was going too far, and he was politely shown the door.

2. *Pleasure.* With affluence oozing all about us, this motive has grown in importance. It is the basis of most advertising for food and drink, for pneumatic mattresses and well-upholstered cars. With kitchens being planned to avoid unnecessary strain, the gadgets that go with them are partly sold by their labour-saving virtues. They add to the housewife's sense of ease.

Removing the strain from work is one aspect of the pleasure principle. Anything, in fact, that contributes to the customer's well-being can be sold in this way, and the method is not to go into intricate detail about the product itself, but to portray the comfort and delight that will be his when he possesses it.

Thus, do not go into the mechanics of the electric lawn-mower but conjure up a picture of the proud owner reclining in his deckchair surveying his swiftly-

cut grass. A prospect will not be generally absorbed by the different functions of the valves in a radio, but he will be interested in the quantities of music and drama that will be available to enjoy.

Ease of driving in cars with automatic gear-boxes, warmth in central heating, the flavour of a liqueur – as some bright American ad-man remarked: ‘Don’t sell the sausage. Sell the sizzle’. A man, in fact, does not buy a product. He buys what it is going to do for him.

Connected with this motive is the sporting reason, or the desire to use leisure for physical improvement. Holidays, fishing tackle, casual clothes, golf-clubs – all these can serve the active urge to fling oneself around and bulge the muscles.

And a final aspect of the pleasure motive is the grace and beauty of the object. Television sets are often sold because of their svelte lines rather than the clarity of their picture. Furniture can please the eye as well as the posture. Even functional equipment can be well designed and thus enhance the visual appearance of office or factory. If all other things are equal, an agreeable appearance can swing the balance. Those who like girls will get the drift.

3. *Pride*. It is true, although frequently unfortunate, that people like to feel important. At the root of all selling – which has been dug over earlier on, and will be unearthed again – is the salesman’s ability to listen to the opinions of his prospects, however wrong-headed they may appear. This is just another way of showing a man that he is worth hearing, that he has dignity and authority for outsiders.

Think of a barrister examining a witness. He does not

command the witness to say what he wants him to say. He *suggests* that this is the right interpretation, and asks the witness to concur. And this is an example of behaviour that a salesman should always follow. You cannot browbeat a prospect – but you can point out to him his wisest course of action. He will give you an order, because you have planted the thought in his mind. You have made him feel important, a captain of his soul.

It is self-esteem, or status-seeking, that makes a man provide expensive public-school education for his children. It is largely pride that makes the aspiring executive run a fashionable car, like a Jaguar. Art-dealers will frequently be confronted with the rich man who just wants an Old Master to put on his walls – yet he can't tell Rubens from Rembrandt. Ladies of all conditions are bedecked with mink for reasons of pride – and they also tend, for the same reason, to own jewellery that it would be too dangerous to wear in the streets.

Most people have an inferiority complex struggling somewhere. They try to suppress it by boosting their egos – and conspicuous expenditure is one of the means of self-inflation.

A business chief will frequently invest in such amenities as air-conditioning or fitted carpets for executive offices so that he can tell his friends how superior his factory is. Of course, the products may have other buying reasons. But you ignore pride at your peril.

That is why a salesman in an up-and-coming district can sell by gently hinting that old Jones down the road

has a splendid greenhouse – and surely you wouldn't let a man like that get a greenhouse ahead? The prospect will be sorely tempted to keep up with that particular Jones.

A story that illustrates this widespread desire to look big concerns a fashionable American musical that was running in London a few years ago. The management were always sold out weeks ahead for stalls, but dress-circle seats at the same price went far more slowly, although they afforded a better view of the stage than many of the side seats on ground level. The reason was that it was not only a show to see, but a show to be seen at. And to be seen in a theatre, the proper place is the stalls.

Pride is not necessarily to be despised. It is one of the motive powers of progress and self-fulfilment. It can be used by the salesman, especially if he sells a product that can be admired by others as well as providing profit and pleasure for its owner.

4. *Health.* There are more hidden hypochondriacs about than the psychologists give credit for. Most people fear illness – and the middle-aged are often conscious of declining powers. One way of arresting this decline is to banish germs, and the health reason is important in selling such gadgets as vacuum-cleaners and fly-killers.

But items of clothing often use this reason, too. One large tailoring firm invites customers to wear its suits because they will make them feel good. Women feel physically buoyant and re-made when they have a dress that suits them.

The health motive is strong, for example, in selling

filter-tipped cigarettes. Whatever the evidence that they are safer than the plain brands, there is no doubt that many people believe they are. The same goes for pipe-tobacco, and the health reason can also apply to medicated soaps, face-powder that claims to leave the features unmottled, refrigerators, and many kinds of food.

5. *Utility*. Little can be said about this buying reason. If your product has any use at all, that is a motive for buying it. But remember that some products have uses that go beyond their announced purpose. Paper tissues, for example, were first manufactured for nose-blowers, who could then throw away the germs with the paper. Now they are bought as napkins, as handy car-packs for drivers who have just changed a wheel, as towels, as cold-cream applicators, and so on.

Many products have uses that are insufficiently exploited. And they might have containers that are subsequently handy for storage, or vases, or cups. Unless you know all these applications, you are not making the best of your product.

6. *Fear*. Many are the perils of living. Fires can break out, accidents can happen, investments can dwindle as credit expands or is squeezed. If your product or service can prevent the worst effects of such personal disasters, then fear is a reason for buying from you.

A straightforward example is insurance. Although it is not recommended that you go to a prospect and predict his death in a couple of years, he can certainly be made aware of the destitution that will be the lot of his brood if he doesn't do something about it. Or the expensive bric-a-brac in his home can be praised, with

the next question being what will happen about replacing them if they all go up in smoke?

Lighting equipment can be sold on this motive. For inadequate light can ruin eyes, or, at the very least, cause strain to the delicate muscles. Safety devices are bought from fear, and so are medicines.

7. *Sentiment*. This is rife amongst women, who can be induced to buy presents for their loved ones (that their loved ones will probably abhor) because the salesman has gratified their affection for them. It can also be used with cine-cameras, for example. A strong reason for obtaining them is to provide a family record of holidays, Tommy's first tooth, or Mary's confirmation. It is a sentimental motive, and it also applies when women buy something because their mothers did so – and what mother did must be right.

All gift-buying and anniversary-marking is strongly sentimental, and the salesman will certainly learn to nurture sentiment amongst long-standing customers who have known his company for a long time and feel more than a mere commercial bond with it.

8. *Creative instinct*. It is not only the Beethovens and Picassos of this world who have an urge to express themselves. Millions of less gifted people like to create something that they can survey with the knowledge that it is all their work, however clumsy, and they derive just as much satisfaction in the process of making it as in the final result.

Young married women, uncertain about their capabilities in the kitchen, buy utensils and gadgets because they enable them to make cakes that their new husbands won't give to the dog. Home decorators will

buy tools, paint, and brushes because they are told that their finished handiwork will have a professional finish thereby. Gardening is essentially a creative outlet for both men and women, and implements that help to make the backyard patch a lovesome thing will serve the urge.

Some people, too, can be taught, or persuaded, to acquire new skills. They can be told about the fulfilment of finding their way about the piano keyboard, or making a replica of a Regency cabinet, or indulging in petit-point embroidery. Most people have interests that can be prompted into hobbies. And every hobby needs some sort of equipment.

9. *Curiosity*. There is an enormous appetite for novelty. If a new magazine or newspaper is launched, for example, with suitable advertising and publicity, it is usually sold out very quickly. It is only after several issues that the publisher knows the sale he can rely upon.

People will go to London's West End to see the first-run of a film, rather than wait a week or so and see it at their local cinema. They will go into a shop and ask for 'the latest novel' – rather than a good one that has been in print for months or years.

Any salesman with a brand-new product in his range can safely put curiosity first amongst buying reasons. It over-rides even utility – for the desire to be 'in the swim' is behind quite a lot of purchases that later gather dust in the attic.

It is also, of course, a permanent factor in buying travel abroad. There are those who go to Blackpool or Clacton every year, and their holidays have become just

as much of a routine as their working lives. But even they can be induced to make a change. And they will be motivated by curiosity if they do. They may have heard of the Alps, but never seen them, or have wondered for years if Pisa's tower really does lean. You can feed this inner need to poke one's nose in other people's business. No man is so dead that he does not feel it at some point in his life.

The nine motives listed above can be expanded, of course. But they cover the major buying reasons. The important thing to remember about them is that they are not mutually exclusive. We have just been discussing travel in terms of curiosity. Other reasons also apply – pleasure, health, pride, for instance. You will not be selling to the top of your bent if you concentrate upon the adventurous instinct of curiosity, and ignore the tuning-up properties of, say, the Riviera, or the fact that 'everyone – but everyone – is going there this year. It's so fashionable.' The latter sentence may, however, drive some isolationists away from the proposition. So, in your assessment of the buyer, be careful that you do not impute to him motives that he may dislike. One man's buying reason can easily be another man's deterrent.

An example of this is, say, a new stain-remover for carpets. Its easy application and astonishing results may be self-evident to you – and, after demonstration, to the vast majority of prospects. But there *are* some people who distrust new inventions just because they are new. Many housewives prefer to go down on their hands and

knees and polish because they then get the satisfaction (the creative urge again) of straightening up, kneading their stiff joints, and knowing that they have worked hard for that new-pin look. For these prospects, you must discard the obvious motive, and search out others – curiosity, maybe, or, if she's really arthritic with all this floor work, health.

An important distinction must be made here. It has been convincingly emphasized, we hope, that you must sell in terms of the buyer's need. You do not sell boot-polish – you sell smart feet. You do not sell a transistor radio – you sell the constant supply of music, on tap at all hours of the day and night. You do not sell insurance – you sell security.

So far, so good. But your product may incorporate unique technical innovations that you are bursting to talk about. Do not blurt them out until you are sure that they are serving one of the buying reasons.

Mention, by all means, that the bar of chocolate is made from a dozen different ingredients, and name a few of them. But never say: 'You must buy this chocolate because it has milk, butter, nougat, almonds, walnuts, and a potent herb from the Brazilian jungle. No chocolate has ever had it so good.' You may get a Brazilophile to buy – but they are thin on the ground.

What you can say is: 'Why don't you taste it? How about that flavour? Doesn't it melt on the tongue? That's because – ' and then you indicate a few of the contents.

Always start with the buyer's motive, and use your specific data to reinforce it.

SELLING SENTENCE

Having mastered your product, and become familiar with the main buying reasons, your next step is to bring the two together. Take a piece of paper and, first of all, list one by one the individual points about your product – everything you know about it.

This list will include the technical aspects. If it's a tin of beans, it will include where they come from, how they are treated before canning, the hygienic scrutiny at the factory, their supply of protein, their cost, their lasting quality (baked beans, for those who can take them, are often used as a reserve in the larder), what the sauce is made of, what foods it can best accompany (some say the flavour of beans meshes with that of bacon), and anything else that contributes to your store of fact about the product.

Now you make a second list. This is a selection of those buying motives enumerated above, or with additional ones provided by yourself, that can possibly apply to your product. Make sure that you haven't missed any out – even those reasons that seem a little far-fetched. It's doubtful if anyone would buy a tin of beans because of pride of possession – but it is faintly feasible that it might be bought from caution, to ensure that people who drop in unexpectedly and famished don't find that there's no food in the house.

The next step is to weld the two lists together. Grade the buying reasons according to their importance – the obvious ones at the top, and the least relevant at the bottom. Then put under each motive the points about your product that support it. Some of these points, of

course, will support more than one buying reason. Thus, if your mythical tin of beans is lower-priced than any other, this fact will help both the profit and the utility motives.

Having done this, you are in a position to mount your strongest attack immediately on whatever type of prospect you come up against. If he does a couple of hours with the dumb-bells every morning and is proud of his sheer-line stomach, you can straight away turn to the healthful properties of those old beans. The other selling points will be subsidiary to the main argument – which will be to demonstrate how beans will sustain his physical wellbeing.

Beans have been used as an instance for no laughing purpose. *Any* and *every* product has more than one buying reason – however limited its appeal might seem superficially.

You will, of course, err in your definition of a prospect's buying motive. You might guess that he is a cautious type, not given to ordering beans by the gross. Then something he says makes you swivel your opinion. He may turn out to be the sort of fellow who thinks so big that he would never dream of one or two of anything.

If you have prepared your list on the lines suggested, you can then amend your approach. Buying motives can be cunningly twisted to the salesman's advantage in this way. If a man shows scant interest in your product – let us suppose now that it is a television set – and the reason he lets drop is because he really wants something more impressive and costly than your portable seventeen-incher, then don't be daunted. Suggest to him that,

by buying from you and saving a tenner, he can use the saving for an additional status object – a picture, perhaps, or five long-playing records, or even an unread book, which looks nice in the shelves.

With experience, you can improvise and use even those buying reasons that seem to be working against you. Many people may not be bowled over if you suggest that a product will save them time. But they will listen more attentively if you tell them that they will have more time to spend in the garden, or play poker, or do the pools. Time in itself may not be a selling factor; using it for pleasurable purposes most certainly is. But be careful that you do not suggest, say, more time in the garden to someone who absolutely detests the spade and trowel. In other words, listen to the prospect's conversation, and learn from it what his interests are.

We are now prepared for the heart of the matter for the salesman. He has learned his product and imbibed a thumb-nail analysis of the types of buyer. He is now in a position to apply this knowledge in an ordered fashion.

The preparatory work has been in the nature of a reconnaissance. It gives a general indication of promising courses of action.

But the salesman has not sold anything yet. He will do that when he can use his information with a purpose. And the principles that should lie behind this purpose are known as the sales sequence. It is not as forbidding as it may sound. It is absolutely not a rigid set of formulae which cannot on any account be infringed.

The sales sequence is a tested and workable guide to the salesman, helping him to shape his thoughts logically and precisely. It is not a means of putting

something over on the customer. It is a way of putting your product and yourself over in the most convincing way.

CHAPTER SIX

THERE are many ways of defining each step in the sales sequence. You may join a company that differs from the one given here. This matters not. What we propose to do is to break down the selling task into stages, examine each in turn, and give pointers to the kind of difficulties and variations you may encounter within each.

The sales sequence is a guide, not a jailer. You may be able to skip one step in the selling process and still achieve your order. There is elbow-room for personal initiative.

The sequence given here, however, does apply to practically every product or service you will be selling. Its outline is this:

1. Pre-approach.
2. Approach.
3. Creation of Interest and Confidence.
4. Product Benefits.
5. Answering Objections.
6. The Close.

Most of these labels are self-explanatory, and they will be discussed in more detail later. What we are concerned to do now is to pause over each section of the sequence and fill in its background. The important thing to remember here is that there is no hard-and-fast

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division between the stages. You do not say to yourself: 'I have done the approach. Now I'll go on to create a little interest.' Each stage overlaps with the other; parts of one may be effected during an earlier or later stage.

PRE-APPROACH

Some aspects of this have already been discussed. Getting out your prospects list is one. So is the mutual analysis of product and buying reasons, so that you have a general blueprint for selling.

Now we are going to bring it down to cases. Your first entry on your prospect card will be somebody's name. You may have learned it during the course of other business. You may have picked it up from the local newspaper, or learned of his existence because he has just bought an expensive product from a colleague.

However you have acquired your knowledge of Mr. X, this information will be scanty. You may be primed that he has moved into a bigger and better house – and that is all. The fact that he is moving up in the world indicates that he wants the goods to go with his new position – but that is as far as you can go.

He is, however, a prospect. The more you find out about him in this pre-approach stage, the more likely it is that he will become a customer. You can talk to him more easily if you know that the other day he entered a tennis tournament, or that he is on the board of the local school, or that he is an enthusiastic supporter of the local dramatic society.

These personality clues can be quite easily picked up. You don't need a course in Agatha Christie or Maigret

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to learn a little of the background of your prospect. But always use this hearsay evidence with judicial deference. It can be misleading, and it should be received with extra pinches of salt. It would be disastrous to bubble breezily in to a man and praise his golf handicap – and be told that he doesn't know a tee from coffee.

Nevertheless, certain indisputable traits can be established by shrewd detective-work. Knowledge of them helps the salesman to mould his selling line so that he is appealing to the prospect's main interests. It also helps him to remove some prospects from his list completely. For example, he wouldn't have much success with car accessories if the man has recently bought a sumptuous limousine with all possible extras.

If the preliminary work is adequate, however, it gives the salesman confidence. He is not going to be ushered into the presence of an unknown quantity, just a name on a card. He knows that there is a good reason for the prospect wanting his product. It takes the whole operation of this particular sale out of the speculative class into that of a safe bet. The more intensive the pre-approach, the nearer he comes to hedging his bet.

And, naturally, it has an effect on the prospect himself. Without being intrusive, the salesman can show that he has taken the trouble to find out something about the man's circumstances. The prospect will then involuntarily feel that the product may be of service.

The pre-approach must be more intensive, according to your product. If you are selling something like a sink-scourer, costing only a few shillings, it is obviously a bit absurd to amass a dossier on the prospect – unless,

of course, he is going to place an order for a few thousand of the things. On the other hand, you may be selling a factory installation running into many hundreds of pounds, and the more you know about your prospect the greater your chances of a sale. You have to make your own valuation of the order you are likely to obtain, and weigh the time you spend on pre-approach accordingly.

You should also recognize that some sales involve more than one prospect. Even if you do business exclusively with retailers, it may be that you will channel the sale through a department buyer up to a merchandising manager, thence to the Managing Director sitting on top. Depending on the size of the order, you may have to convince three or four prospects instead of one. Accordingly, your pre-approach must be even more exactly and thoroughly carried out, so that you can allow for the clash of personalities, and odd contingencies.

As a guide to the sort of background you can assemble during this period, here are some headings:

1. *Name.* It can be a fatal error to get a prospect's name wrong. Some have peculiarities of pronunciation. If he's called 'Kerr', he may like you to say 'Carr'. Some 'Browns' spell it with an 'e' after the 'n'. Others have hyphens which they treasure. You may write to him. In that case, the first thing he notices is 'Dear Mr. Rendle' when he was fathered by a 'Rendall'. Even if he is not the pompous type, his first impression won't be favourable. He will think that, if you can't spell his name, can you be trusted to be accurate about the other matters that you are supposed to be informed

about and he is not? It's not worth taking the risk.

2. *Age.* If he's got twice your tally of years, he is more responsive if you recognize this in your manner. Without grovelling, you should nevertheless suggest that his years and experience command your respect. Similarly, if he is in the same age-bracket as you and yet an influential man in his company, some indication that you appreciate this rapid eminence won't come amiss.

3. *Home.* If a man lives in Mayfair, he's probably more of a sophisticated gadabout than the resident of Tooting. If he has a family, and he is going to purchase anything that carves a decent slice from his bank-balance, he will certainly hope for approval from his wife and those children out of the prattling stage. He will thus be comforted if you can suggest that they would be pleased, too. And you can't do this if you don't know about them.

4. *Education.* The public-school man, sporting its tie and accent, likes to know that his expensive adolescence has left its mark upon him. Equally, the poor boy who has worked his way to a first-class degree at Oxford or Cambridge is rather proud of his educational prowess. If the poor boy is now the boss without any education at all, he is even prouder.

5. *Interests.* This has been touched on earlier. Even if you do know that he's a keen card-player, however, do not raise it as soon as you make contact, unless this fancy has some close link with the product. If he mentions it himself, that is your cue to show intelligent interest. It's all a question of tact and timing. Remember, too, that you are in the man's office to sell him something, not to commiserate with him about his

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missing first prize at the rhododendron show, or whatever. Most of your prospects will have only limited time to spare you. Unless they show signs of wanting to chat idly, don't waste the interview on side issues. You may find yourself having a stimulating conversation, but being courteously ushered out with a cutting from his garden – and no order.

6. *Business routine.* Everyone likes to do certain things at a certain time. If you know that your prospect favours a pre-lunch cocktail in the local hostelry at twelve-thirty, it is wise not to arrive unannounced at twelve-twenty-five. He will be impatient, with ebbing hopes of his gin-and-tonic, and he won't give you his full attention. He may like to dictate answers to the day's mail between ten and eleven – and, again, he won't relish disturbance. He may like to see salesmen only in the afternoons. He may believe in short lunch hours or long ones. Try, in fact, to time your arrival so that it causes no inconvenience to his habitual procedure.

7. *Prospect's company.* This is the most indispensable pre-approach knowledge of the lot. After all, you are going to sell him something that will help his business or himself. Ignorance is never bliss in this case, and the greater the insight into the buyer's commercial or manufacturing affairs the better. It allows the salesman to stress the service aspect of his product. For example, if he knows that the company uses, say, ten raw materials to manufacture their own articles, he can bring this into his own sales story to show that he has given the matter prior thought. If he knows that the buyer's company sells a seasonal product, he can say that 'I know this is your peak period so far as output is

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concerned' – and the buyer will be favourably impressed.

Other things about a company are more directly useful. The chain of command, for instance, may influence your choice of the person to see. Much time can be wasted in seeing an underling who has no power of decision, but will merely transmit you, or a garbled version of what you've told him, to a superior.

Knowing the buyer's business is not mere nosey-parkering. It will enable you to assess the benefit your own product will bring to him, and place it in the context of the buyer's needs. In other words, you can prophesy more closely what the buyer's motive will be and put it at the forefront of your reasons for buying.

BUILDING UP THE PORTRAIT

Assume that you have John Brown's name and nothing else. You have to set about sketching him, unseen, using the pre-approach list given above. Unfortunately, few of your prospects will be notable enough to rate an entry in 'Who's Who' or any other biographical dictionary. You have to complete your portrait from a rag-tag-and-bobtail of sources. Many of these were mentioned during the survey of prospects, and some of the information you may have gathered when you first heard the name. It's rare for a name to be brought up without some descriptive matter – if only that 'old so-and-so's a surly sod – practically threw me out of the shop.' Even that would indicate that he is a ticklish customer, best approached armed.

Again, there's no golden rule for assembling pre-

approach data. Anyone, or anything, in contact with the salesman may furnish a useful fact. The detective analogy can be overdone – it suggests that the prospect is some sort of culprit and you are out to nab him – but you must work with similar alertness and curiosity.

Amongst the most prominent sources will be:

1. *Regular customers.* Retailers, especially in small towns and suburbs, will certainly know a great deal about their fellow shopkeepers and rivals. They are not at all averse to passing the information on – not as a result of a question-and-answer session, but as a result of apparently casual enquiry. If you know your customer well, of course, there is nothing to prevent your asking him outright. The retailer will also be at the hub of gossip from his own customers, and from other salesmen who call upon him. This, too, may be helpful to you, if you can find a way of drawing on it.

2. *Your own firm.* With many products, the first interest a prospect may show in them is by phoning your head office. They will take a note of his name and address, so that you can call on him. But if whoever received the phone call is up to his job, he should have asked a few more questions than those necessary for mere identification. He may have discovered something about the prospect's business, about his availability, about the purpose for which he wants the product. All this will help the salesman to have a general idea of his approach technique. Then, if he has the time before the appointment, he can keep his ears skinned for further information.

3. *Local Press.* Earlier, we explained how the names of prospects can be found through this source. But there is

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another important kind of information from small newspapers. Because they are so limited in the districts they cover, they include a vast amount of news about them. It is quite possible that your territory will cover quite a wide area, and you cannot hope to know everything that goes on in it, down to the opening of a new social club or the placing of the town's football team in a minor league. But your prospects will, and many of their attitudes and interests centre upon what goes on in their communities.

If you can go up to a man and say that you read about the burglary from the store next door, or how sad it was that the Town Clerk was jailed for fiddling the accounts, you will capture his attention. You are not adding to your stock of knowledge about him personally by reading his local paper. But you are showing interest in all those affairs, that may seem minor to you, but bulk large in his experience because they happen within his orbit.

It is hardly helpful to catalogue other sources for portrait-building, as they are too various, and special to the salesman's job. The vital factor is to ensure that you get it down on record. Use those card-index files. You will soon find that as a prospect becomes a customer, and then a regular customer, you will know as much about him as anyone in the community – even, in some cases, his wife. You will know his temperament, his hobbies, his fads, his ambitions. If you have to call and see him only twice a year, you can still refer to something that was said the last time you saw him – because you made a note of it. He will be utterly delighted that he is so important in your life that you brood over his observations.

JUDGING THE PROSPECT

The baited moment will soon arrive when you meet your prospect face to face. If he is the owner or manager of a business, you can still learn much about him on the way in. When you first mention his name, voices might drop to an awed whisper, indicating that he is either a bully or demi-god, but more probably the former. If his secretary is informal when she phones through to him to announce your arrival, he may have an easy way with his employees. If office-boys are struggling noisily in the passage and the place is littered with bureaucratic refuse, the prospect would seem to have little pride in his company – so that buying motive can be relegated to third or fourth on the list.

We distrust those quick judgements that are based on appearances, which can be so deceptive that they may do more harm than good to the salesman's cause. Thin lips do not always imply meanness. Stout parties are not invariably self-indulgent. Pipe-smokers are not necessarily outdoor sporting types. If you were to accept these classifications, you'd be in a mental whirl when you come across a fat man with thin lips, smoking a pipe.

But it is possible to tell, by observation, the man who will respond to chaff and the one who prefers to get down to business. It is recommended that you wait until confronted with the prospect before sizing him up.

Then you can listen to his voice. Just as your own enunciation is typical of you, so will voice and vocabulary betray the prospect. If his tones are clipped and the accent polished, it would probably be disastrous to

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begin by a blunt demonstration of your product's cheapness. If his speech is halting and his sentences trail, keep your sales story simple and reiterate its chief points.

Similarly, clothes can indicate the man – although less than they used to do. If he is wearing the latest in shawl collars and tapered trousers, he will be impressed with the modishness of your product. If his cuffs are scruffy and his shirt has lost all memory of the laundry, then he is hardly likely to have pride as a buying motive.

The prospect's manner, whether his features are world-weary or buoyant, if he has an ungainly walk – all these contribute to your initial portrait of him. Here again, this is an almost unconscious assimilation on your part. You don't stand before him and rudely stare, in order to watch face, figure, and gait. You can form your opinion in a few seconds – and then use it, with your earlier information, to formulate the approach.

A word of warning here. Just as selling has developed principles and techniques, so has buying. The buyer, too, can be a professional man, working to certain rules laid down by his company. Many experienced buyers nowadays know as much about selling as you do. This does not mean that you can then discard all you have been taught because you feel you've been rumbled.

It does mean, however, that you must not make too many firm conclusions from the pre-approach. The man who buys in bulk for combines or large companies tends to be impersonal. It doesn't matter whether he's large and expansive, or thin and brusque, he will judge you and your product in a more detached way. So

beware of pigeon-holing him; he may be a dove or a crow.

But you can gear yourself to other obvious characteristics of the prospect. If he emits words at a rate of knots, speed up your own presentation. He will probably be a man who likes to cut corners and the cackle. He gives an impression of helter-skelter efficiency, and if he considers you also have the scalded-cat mentality, he will warm to you at once. Also, he is likely to take a quick decision in your favour, so long as you keep pace with him.

On the other hand, he may be a deliberate type, who produces every word as if it was the result of some agonizing internal upheaval. In his case, too, you must beware of being brash and over-fluent. He will appreciate patient explanation, rather than whirlwind enthusiasm, which might, indeed, frighten him off altogether.

The taciturn man is more suspicious than the babbler. Lurking in the recesses of his quiet mind there is probably the thought that you are trying to hurl him into a situation he will subsequently regret. You can obviate this by your own calm delivery, and also by involving him in the sale. You do this by asking a simple question that requires a simple answer.

You will frequently come across the man who just cannot make up his mind. You have to do this for him. He is the one who, in his office, will have his desk cluttered with unfinished business. He will inspect his finger-nails or the distemper on the walls rather than you. He will jump at any difficulty that will save him the effort of deciding 'yes' or 'no'. This kind of prospect

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is, again, an invitation to you to keep it simple. Reduce the complications so that he has nothing to dispute. Be firm, and stick to the highway of the sale, without side-tracking for minor embellishments. You have to take his decision for him, and suggest that he can have the benefit of your product without any trouble or fuss.

A further aspect of portrait-building is this. We have mentioned that you may be sent the name of a prospect from your head-office. He is partially sold already; otherwise he would not have been in touch with your company. With this man, you do not have to justify your product, for he realizes his need for it without any prompting from you. What you must bring to him is a specific proposition. He may want a bedroom suite – but he will not necessarily want yours. You can start by implying that your suite will fill the bill, and then answer objections if they come along. It is a matter of focusing your story on your product's advantages over others, and not upon the desirability of bedroom suites in general.

His objections may be about the price, for he's probably taken the trouble to find out about other suites, some of which are cheaper than yours. Or he may have been sleeping for years on a particular make of mattress, and would find it quite a wrench to recline upon another. In this case, you must sell hard to shake his brand loyalty. Familiarity, with many prospects, does not breed contempt, but affection. There is then a barrier you must surmount.

Here we diverge for a moment to emphasize one thing. In selling, do not present your own product in a favourable light by denigrating your rivals. It seems an

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easy way out, to sneer at a competing brand, suggesting, perhaps, that it is shoddy or made from inferior materials and falls apart at a touch.

But it fails on nearly every occasion. The reason is that the prospect needs faith and confidence in you, and what you tell him. If you start to run down another product, he reacts in the way he would if you were telling tales out of school about a friend. The trust you should have established between you is shattered, and so is your chance of a sale.

What, in effect, the pre-approach must do is to eliminate as many uncertainties about the sale as you can. You can then enter the prospect's sanctum with a well-grouped hope that you can benefit him. With a completely unknown quantity, you will always be wondering – at least in the early stages of the interview – what he is like. This uncertainty will be reflected in your own bearing and behaviour.

The tentative approach will work against you. You will resemble a batsman who cannot decide what stroke to make, and sees his middle stump go while he's making up his mind.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Now we come to the second stage in the sales sequence – the Approach. In brief, it covers your effort to get to grips with the prospect after you have surveyed him from afar. It also embraces what you must do to get him to listen to you, and to arouse his interest. You can see

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that the key to a successful sale is turned during the approach. It is no good having a detailed portrait of the prospect if he refuses to see you when you call. It is useless to have a cast-iron case for the prospect to buy your product if he won't listen to you.

Specialty salesmen are most in need of a skilful approach. Most of their prospects are strangers; they may be positively prickly and belligerent towards the salesman at first. They have to be won over in the early stages, and made receptive to the proposition by the salesman drawing attention to their need for it. And this need may not even have been realized by the prospect.

The initial difficulty is to pin the prospect down. Some salesmen believe, particularly if they represent a company with a wide public reputation, that they have only to go to an outer office, give a minion their card, and they are ushered in with a fanfare of trumpets. It may work sometimes, but it cannot be guaranteed.

There is not much personality about a piece of pasteboard, even if it carries the magic name of Unilever or Remington. Use it by all means as an accessory, but do not rely on it as a door-opener. A card is most useful at the end of the sale rather than the beginning, when it can serve as a reminder of your call.

Also, do not show stunned amazement if the name of your company is received in stony silence. It is a common fault among salesmen to expect that their firms are household names, bandied about morning, noon, and night. Because they have the name on the tip of their tongues dozens of times a day, they assume that outsiders, too, must have the same interest. Such

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preconceived ideas can mislead – and they all go counter to the salesman's basic attitude, which is to put the needs of the prospect first.

HOW TO OPEN DOORS

Any salesman must expect that much of his working day is spent in waiting-rooms or outer offices. Even if his pre-planning is so exact that he times his arrival for an appointment to the split second, he will have some waiting; indeed, the more fixed your timetable, the more likely you are to hang about. Invariably, one interview will run over-length, and push all your subsequent arrangements out of true.

To preserve your patience, consider the prospect. He may be a busy tycoon, with a phalanx of assistants and secretaries to keep his executive mind free from intrusion. Or he may be a lesser tycoon, who makes himself feel good by putting on an act of mystery. Many's the cog who tries to make himself out a big wheel. If you are honest with yourself, you will know the symptoms in yourself – when you tell a friend of your warm relationship with your boss, for example, and all he's done is to wish you 'good morning' in the corridor. True or false, the important buyer's status must be respected by you.

Nobody likes to be kept waiting. Even if they wouldn't be filling the time in any more constructive fashion, they still get restive and irritated. The salesman must guard against this inner seething of revolt. He should contrive to occupy himself in some way, and preferably with something concerning his business.

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Don't sit there twiddling your thumbs, moving from haunch to haunch, and counting the patterns on the wall-paper. There will always be a certain amount of tension in calling on a prospect. Don't increase it by idle brooding.

For you will then rush in to the prospect, resentful of the delay he's caused you and anxious, perhaps, to make a quick getaway for another appointment at the other end of town. This is not the best way to make a sale. Your forced smile and suppressed anger will communicate to him. He will either feel guiltily in the wrong – in which case he will want to see the back of you as quickly as possible. Or he will himself be resentful of your attitude, however smoothly you think you've disguised it. He will, in fact, not be concentrating on your product at all.

In order to see many prospects, you must pass those people, like receptionists and secretaries, who guard them. In some cases, you need to sell yourself to them. A salesman with a vigorous and lively manner – but this side of arrogance – is more likely to get the buyer's staff on his side. And this may be vital if he has not made an appointment.

Some salesmen ignore clerical staff, preferring to preserve their forces for their employer. But these people are not trivial, to be by-passed brusquely. They have their own dignity and pride, and you need them on your side. A secretary can often whisper a word of poison about you in her employer's ear. Equally, if she sees that you exude confidence, smile at her openly, and generally look on top of your form, she will be more inclined to see that you get where you want to go.

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One company, in fact, stresses this aspect of the approach in its training course for salesmen. There is no need to explain your business in any detail. The girl is not going to buy from you. But it might be helpful to say enough to indicate to her that she will be helping her employer if she admits you. After all, she knows the workings of his mind better than you. If you want to sell him a new car and she knows that he wants to buy one, it would be her duty to let you through.

Secretaries, in fact, will often give you a hint about how their employers will react. Pronounce your name to them clearly, so that it's not garbled in transmission. Be courteous, by standing up when she leaves the room or offering her a light if she wants to smoke – and is allowed to. Don't try to wheedle her into telling you something about her boss; she won't respect you for it, even if she talks. And remember to thank her for her help – even if she hasn't been able to give you any. It is only another way of making her remember you the next time you call. If you leave an agreeable memory, your entry will be easier next time.

APPROACH ROADS

Just as there are many ways of travelling from A to B, so there are at least four ways of approaching the prospect. These will be separately aired.

1. *Calling unannounced.* The initiative here is with the salesman. When he meets the buyer, he has to arouse his interest in a minute or so, or he will give the impression that his journey was strictly unnecessary and time-wasting. Thus the importance of an opening sentence

that sells – and this is where your knowledge of buying motives comes into play. You will still have a lot to do later to complete the sale, but you won't be able to go any further if you haven't caught his attention in the first instance.

Nerves often make a salesman rush his opening as if it was a kind of Becher's Brook and he was in sight of the winning post. This is very wrong. The buyer must be able to assimilate the sense of it, so be clear and deliberate. Take it easy. Make sure that your drift is not lost in a gush of words.

A selling sentence may be:

'Good morning, Mr. X. My name is Jones from the Y television-rental company. Would you like to know how we can save you a lot of worry about your set, take the whole load off your shoulders, with our comprehensive system?'

Here you are appealing forthrightly to the comfort buying reason. You are offering to ease his mind, remove a burden of care about replacements for faulty parts.

The sentence may go like this:

'I'm sure that you are interested in cutting costs. I can help you there. With this equipment, you can duplicate letters at half the price you've been paying so far. Will you allow me to show you how? ...'

His profit motive will now be working overtime. Similarly, you can frame in advance a series of sentences that apply to the various motives for buying your product. At this stage, detail is not required. You want a clear statement of the benefit you can bring to the prospect.

Curiosity can be aroused. One salesman had an

approach which involved his sending in a note stating: 'If you see me, it might be worth £1,000 a year to you.' He was selling a kind of packaging which suited the prospect's product, and he'd roughly estimated the saving if the prospect changed to it. This approach often worked, although the curiosity arouser can go badly wrong. Never use an opening sentence that you cannot eventually prove to be correct. It may get you attention at first, but disappointment will soon set in if you can't substantiate the claim.

Without forcing it, try and make your first sentence a question. There is a good reason for this. If the prospect is grim and unresponsive, there is no need for him to say anything in answer to a statement, however surprising. He will be a pretty cold fish if he keeps his lips sealed after a question. Even a non-committal grunt shows that he has heard. Once a man is involved by answering your question, it is easy to take him another step in your argument. You are not there to give an address. Your intention is to involve him in the sale.

The opening sentence, or question, must be concerned with the product. Generalities like 'Isn't it a lovely day?' or 'Business booming?' are useless. He may agree or disagree, but, whatever he says, it doesn't lead you nearer a sale. It is a false start.

Some firms teach their salesmen to know their opening sentences by heart. They have then a repertoire of, say, six or seven ice-breakers, which they can trot out to suit the occasion. This is not always advisable. The salesman who talks like an obedient parrot may be clever enough to disguise that he is delivering a prepared

brief. But he is often stymied if the unexpected happens. If you enter a shop or an office with your opener pat, you can be thrown quite off your stroke if the prospect interrupts you to take a phone call, or sneezes, or offers you a cigarette.

Certainly, no company believes in a salesman learning his entire presentation in this way. It seems better for the salesman to think out his approach in advance, to know what he has to say but not every unshakable word of it. But, again, this does depend on the individual. If you are inclined to falter under scrutiny and stop in mid-passage, then learn the opening sentence by all means. If you are naturally confident and enterprising, unlikely to be confused by a gimlet eye, then rely on your impromptu abilities. Always know what you will say, but leave the exact expression of it to the spur of the moment.

Although the stumbling reference to the state of the weather is frowned upon, you can, of course, arouse the prospect's interest by showing appreciation of his office, or his factory, or his house. (Don't glow over his wife, though. That might be misconstrued.) The difficulty here is to switch the subject from his Georgian desk, say, to your product. But there's often a neat way of doing it. Having admired the desk, for instance, you can say something like: 'Do you mind if I put this working model down on it?' or 'It's wonderful how those old craftsmen made such beautiful things. And craftsmanship is really what I wanted to talk to you about.'

So long as you can engineer the change of subject smoothly, there is no harm in sincere praise.

But suppose that you are calling on a regular customer. Is there an opening sentence for him? Many salesmen take familiar customers too much for granted. They go in with an offhand 'Anything from me today, Bill?' and just have nowhere to go if the answer is no. The approach and the sequence are relevant for *every* sale.

With a regular customer, for example, you can mention a new development in the product, or special advertising campaigns, or perhaps a change in the retailer's margin. He will then be injected with fresh interest, and may order more than he'd originally intended. It is tempting to be lackadaisical and complacent with customers you know well. You begin to take them for granted. Always bear in mind that you are not the only salesman he sees. Some of his callers represent competing products, and are after his goodwill and orders. One day you may go back to that customer and find that he's ordered from another source. The drive and enterprise of another salesman has beaten you, you may say. But what has really defeated you is your smugness.

2. *Introduction.* If someone does you a good turn, you are inclined to help him. A customer who is pleased with your product and knows that you have taken trouble to suit it to his needs can be a valuable friend to a salesman. He can gladly ring one of your prospects and tell him to make time for you. He can furnish you with a covering note that will ease your approach, and will go a long way towards making the prospect receptive.

It is also sometimes helpful, especially if your pro-

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duct is costly, for you to carry a letter from your sales director to the prospect. This has two helpful effects. It is a less impersonal way of announcing yourself, for the letter can be taken in to the prospect when you arrive. Also, it is useful if you are seeing a company director, or a buyer of any considerable standing. He may himself like to be reassured that you have the backing of an equivalent executive in your own firm. Some important buyers have their vanities – and a letter addressed to them, maybe apologizing for not being able to see them in person but ensuring them that you know all the answers, etc., will rub them up the right way. Another point is that, if the buyer still refused to see you, he would not merely be discourteous to a salesman; he would be administering a rebuff to the man who wrote the letter, his business equal. And this, in the right circles, is definitely not done.

Incidentally, if a customer promises that he will write to your prospect, do not rely on it. Many a salesman has come unstuck this way. He walks boldly in and says: 'Of course, you have already heard about me from Mr. Smith in the High Street.' The prospect looks blank and puts the mental shutters up. He either thinks the salesman is lying and trying to pull a fast one, or he has an inkling that Mr. Smith may pretend to be on your side but, in fact, hates your guts. So you can't win. Wait for the prospect himself to bring up the letter from Mr. Smith. If he doesn't, just forget it.

Also, do not mention the names of other customers without permission from them. It is the easiest thing in the world to say that old so-and-so is absolutely enraptured with the product and is anxious to recommend

it to all and sundry. It is on the cards that the prospect may ring old so-and-so after you've left and be told: 'Yes, I'm quite pleased with it. But why should he drag my name in? I hope he's not going to mention me all over town.' Most people don't like to be used for the purposes of another man's business. If you name-drop carelessly, you will lose both the prospect and further orders from the customer.

3. *Telephone approach.* To phone, or not to phone, can be a complex question. The decision you make can win you an order or a blank.

First of all, it should be made plain that many experienced salesmen believe that you should never use the phone. The danger is that it is far easier for a prospect to say 'no', or to make excuses through his secretary, when he hasn't got to turn you down in person. This makes it practically impossible for you to see him at all, and you can write him off your list.

However, you have to make appointments somehow, and the telephone is the handiest invention for that purpose. Use it as such – and reserve your selling, unless it is a repeat order for a regular customer, for the actual interview.

A subsidiary use of the telephone is to find out the name of the man you want to see. It sometimes happens that you do not know it, although you want to see the appropriate executive in a company. Ask the switch-board for the information, before you are put through. Then you can address him by name, or use it with his secretary.

Inevitably, a secretary will say, if she doesn't know you from Adam: 'What is the purpose of your call?'

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This is not mere obstructive tactics on her part. Most busy men can't afford the time to talk to every Tom, Dick, or Harry, and will want to know your business first.

So don't brush her off. Tell her what it's all about, but briefly. If you want to sell him insurance, say that you want to show him something that will secure his and his family's future. If you want to change all his office furniture, say that you want to increase the efficiency of his business.

You must register as swiftly as possible that you are anxious to help him. Never betray that he is going to do you a favour by seeing you. Appeal, in fact, to his self-interest. One thing is certain about a phone conversation. If you can keep him talking for a minute, you are practically certain to see him. So arouse interest as a first priority, and put the opening sentence in the form of a question that demands an affirmative answer, or a thoughtful reply.

Thus, say 'Did you know that the sick rate in your factory is one of the highest in the area?' or 'Have you seen the new strip-lighting in the local Post Office?' Give him a chance to reply and then lead into your product.

But when you sense that you have aroused his interest, say 'When will it be convenient for me to call around?' In fact, make the appointment while you still have something to tell him. Let him nurse his curiosity for a day or two. It will do your cause no harm.

4. *Writing a letter.* By this, we mean a letter that will get you, purely and simply, an appointment. A full sales letter, which has to stand proxy for you, is a different matter.

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Again, you must find out the name of the prospect, if you don't already know it. In the letter, you must interest him to the point that he feels he might be missing something if he doesn't see you. Here, your prospect preparation will be handy. For instance if you can start your letter 'Dear Mr. Smith, Congratulations on your promotion ...' you have won the first round. Or if you can begin by hoping that he has 'settled in after the move', the sympathetic concern will be gratefully received.

Thereafter, you pursue the principles of the approach that have been expressed earlier. It is a good thing to say, at the end of your letter and after suggesting a day for the appointment, that you will ring his secretary to confirm it. Some business men are lazy letter-writers, and you may have to wait for ever if you hint that you want a written reply.

Phrasing your letter is important. Be direct, and do not flannel it up with tired old verbosities like 'esteemed self' and 'humbly beseech'. These should have gone out with Dickens, but surprisingly linger on in some quarters. A good test is to read your letter aloud before posting it. If it is so stiff-jointed that you can't get your tongue round it, if it is not a natural expression of your thoughts, then tear it up and start again.

ATTENTION GETTERS

We have already explained that your appearance should be without blemish, and this is the stage in the sale when you need to be at your most impressive. The prospect won't yet be interested in your product, so he

will concentrate upon you. If the sight is reasonably agreeable, at least he is not inclined to break off the interview before it's started. But, assuming that your presence is stylish and hygienic, what can be a disturbing factor is a mannerism.

You know how some people always say 'you know' at the end of a sentence, or others fiddle with a ring on their finger, or jingle the coins in their pocket. These all detract from what they have to say. With a salesman, after he has used his personal graces for the approach, his message is all-important. He must ensure that it is listened to.

Sometimes, of course, the prospect himself is nervous, and he will respond more easily to a gentle approach. But your most difficult prospect will be the man who goes right on doing his business while you are there, and giving you only a half of his mind.

He may be signing letters, or constantly interrupting to speak to his secretary or colleagues, or leave the salesman to simmer in silence while he pores over the papers on his desk. The salesman must so regulate himself that he doesn't boil over.

It is also important not to sit there and take it for too long. Time is as valuable to you as to the prospect. You are not there to be browbeaten, but to give a service. You must remember that, if you knuckle under to being ignored unless there is a good reason for it, the prospect's opinion of you will slump.

So it is to your advantage to interrupt him. Do it firmly, not deferentially. One good attention-getter is to say: 'I see you're busy, Mr. Smith. Perhaps I have called too early. Shall I wait outside for ten minutes

while you clear things up in here?' Invariably, the prospect will push his other affairs aside and listen to you. He may want to wriggle out of the interview, but he won't want to postpone it for ten minutes.

But don't ever apologize for being there. This, too, puts your relationship with the prospect on the wrong footing. You are then very much the junior partner in the interview, and the initiative has been wrested from you. Why should you say that you are sorry for taking his time? You are there to satisfy his need. He's the one who should apologize if there is no sale – for being so dim-witted that he cannot see the benefit to him or his company.

And don't ever start to explain your product while the prospect is inattentive. You will not do yourself justice. Even if he says that he can listen and sign letters at the same time, don't fall for it. He is kidding himself, and he will be able to avoid looking you in the eye.

Getting him in the eye-line is an important matter in selling. A shy, or shifty, prospect will do anything rather than look at you. He will fumble on the desk, or blow his nose, or tie his shoe-laces rather than meet your gaze. Somehow you have to persuade him to look in your direction, and one good means of doing this is by producing literature about your product, or the product itself, or, if it is a large piece of equipment, a model of it. He will then be intrigued enough to look and see what you are up to – and that is your chance to grab his elusive attention for yourself, or, at the very least, focus it on the material you have brought out.

Let's face it – there *is* a widespread fear of salesmen. People are scared that they are going to be double-

talked and tricked out of their money. Many, in fact, will be much more incoherent than you, and therefore inclined to distrust you for your greater fluency.

This barrier must be broken down. You can do it in many ways. One is to generalize about the benefits of your product. Instead of pointing them out at first in terms of the prospect's circumstances, talk about 'people like you' or 'it has happened many times in the past that...'. This will relax him, for you are not appearing to mount a direct assault on his bank-balance.

You can also tell him that you don't want to sell him anything *now*. You just want to outline the product and its uses, so that he has enough information for a decision, which can be leisurely and later. This, too, puts the suspicious prospect at ease. He feels master of his fate and the captain of his soul. He knows that you will go out of his office without a sale. Your job now is to sell so persuasively that he gives you an order willy-nilly, or to leave him so disgruntled that he is not profiting from your product that he will ring *you* up to place an order the next day.

A third way of calming the nervous prospect is to ask for his opinion about a plan you have. The plan, of course, is bound up with your product. You outline it as if it were intended for a Martian, chipping in an occasional 'What do you think?' or 'Shouldn't there be a change in this method?' Thus the prospect gets the comfortable feeling that he is a professional consultant. You can then subtly suggest that the plan is ideal for his circumstances, too.

As you can see, a good approach will have achieved a

further stage of the sales sequence. It will have created interest. Your next chore is to develop that interest into a positive desire to buy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THERE are twin, and closely linked, objectives in the next stage of the sales sequence. They are to establish the prospect's need for your product, and, by creating confidence in it, to change that general need into a positive want.

Again, don't get the idea that this stage is an exclusive operation. You don't suddenly decide that you have created enough interest, stop abruptly, and begin to build up confidence. You must think of the whole sequence as if you were courting a girl with honourable intentions. You would find out something about her (the pre-approach), you would make contact (the approach), you would impress her with your smart suiting and man-of-the-world suavity (creating interest), you would be a reliable and circumspect swain (creating confidence), you would discuss your job and its prospects (product benefits), you would stifle her doubts (answering objections), and you would get the ring (closing the sale).

But these steps in your progress to the final consummation would be smoothly graded. You may be able to bound over one, and need to pause on another. So it is with the sales sequence.

CONFIDENCE BUILDERS

Before embarking on the assurances about the product that will settle the prospect's mind, you must have clear in your own mind how many, if any at all, he needs. For example, if you are selling a car to a man who already drives an earlier model of the same make, you may be able to assume that he has some faith in your company. You may be wrong about this, of course – the buyer might have been unlucky and the car brought him to the verge of bankruptcy – but it will soon appear from his behaviour if this is so. In that case, you have a real crisis of confidence on your hands.

But, in general, those prospects familiar with your company and its products won't need much convincing that they are reliable. The more you emphasize that they are, the more doubts you are likely to sow. He will start to think that they can't be as good as all that if you need to plug them so hard.

Even if the prospect has not used, or bought, your product before, he may still have faith in its reputation. With thousands of millions of pounds being spent on Press and TV advertising, it would be rather stupid of the salesman to tell prospects about the solid company background of, say, Guinness or Cadbury's. Many customers will be quite at home with the claims made for the big national products, and a salesman would be well advised to let the advertising and publicity speak for itself, without repetition from him.

But all companies, and products, are not in this household name bracket. These are the ones that require

advocacy by the salesman. And his reassurances can take many forms:

1. Your company may have a long history and associations. The fact of its longevity gives confidence.

2. It may have been recently modernized or re-equipped with new machinery.

3. The production process may demand a high degree of craftsmanship from the workers. Most people have a regard for craftsmen, in preference to technicians. Magazine articles about the disappearance of thatchers, smiths, and wheelwrights are evidence of this.

4. Your own long service with the same company can be a selling factor. If you have made yourself agreeable to the prospect, he will be favourably disposed towards your company, merely because you like it yourself.

5. Your product, when properly cared for, can have a long life. In that case, it is comforting for a customer to know that, say, a sewing-machine, bought before George V grew his beard, is in good working order.

6. Your product may have a Royal Warrant. Any connexion with the Royal Family is a password to confidence.

7. If it needs after-sales maintenance, or attention in any way, details of your company's arrangements for it will dispel worries about what happens when you have gone out of town.

8. Eminent members of your board of directors can give a feeling of solidity. That is why a Lord or two can be found in most City board-rooms. They do not merely create confidence amongst investors, but can dumbfound the impressionable prospect, if the salesman introduces the magical peer with the right hushed deference.

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You can certainly add to this list of the main confidence-builders yourself. There are hundreds of variations – almost as many as there are products and companies. You can talk about a huge order your company recently received from abroad. You can mention a new executive appointment of some highly-lettered boffin in the factory. You can refer to the company's pension scheme for its employees, if it is a notably generous one. This sows the thought that, if it is so solicitous within its own four walls, it must be helpful and considerate to outside customers.

There is no exact place in the interview for introducing your confidence-builder. You may reserve it for your discussion of product benefits. You may sidle it early into the prospect's mind. But you must be honest about it. Some salesmen, thinking hopefully that they cannot be checked, tend to claim improbable virtues for their companies and personnel. These lies are soon detected, and won't be forgiven or forgotten. The news soon spreads.

SELLING THE PRODUCT

The first thing to say about selling the product is that you don't. You don't expatiate upon the excellence of the materials, the quality of its finish, the precision of its nuts and bolts. You sell the benefit that the product will bring to the prospect.

Once you have grasped the distinction – and it is probably the most vital principle in selling – you will be in a position to angle your sales talk on the buyer's interest. He does not care about a radio's internal

organs, the potency of its valves and the delicacy of its resistors; he wants to know that he can get the full richness of an orchestra, or the news faster than any other medium can bring it to him.

He will be swayed if you enthuse about the prosperous bouquet and the satisfying stomach-glow from a bottle of wine – but he will get impatient if you tell him how the grapes were grown and how the liquid has been matured.

That is why those sales points you have isolated in connexion with your product must be expressed in terms of their advantages to the prospect. It is one of the few selling rules to which there is no exception. But it does not mean that technical product material is never given. A retailer, or a knowledgeable buyer, may need it and ask for it. This sort of elaboration, however, always takes second place to the benefits.

Speak, as much as you can, in images. Dramatize your sales story so that it has colour and variety. To help you, there are several kinds of sales aids. For, in selling, one picture can be more effective than a thousand words.

1. *Photographs.* All products that are too heavy to cart around are illustrated. If they lend themselves to colour photography all the better. If there is a succession of photographs, illustrating a machine in operation, for example, the salesman must ensure that they are arranged in the correct order. Nothing destroys cogency, and sends the prospect's attention wandering, quite so quickly as a salesman fumbling through his folder and brief-case, dropping things on the floor, and seeming totally unprepared.

It is a good idea to number photographs on the back, so that you can turn back easily to one you have already shown, if the prospect appears dissatisfied about a particular point.

Photographs – and any demonstration material – should be produced at the earliest possible moment. The eye is more easily captured than the ear – and you also have authority for your statements about the product. If it is a washing-machine on rollers, for instance, you can show them on the photograph – and maybe add that they are so engineered that the machine can be pushed in any direction at will.

Another advantage of illustration, of course, is that it reminds the salesman of points he might otherwise overlook. This is especially true if there are many selling factors to your product. You merely weaken your case if you omit any of them – and one might be sufficient to tip the scales in your favour.

2. *Models.* Replicas in miniature of large items of equipment are getting more popular. They enable you to cut the cackle, and thus conduct a more effective interview. One firm, making printing machinery, also found that a model reduced the time taken for an interview to such an extent that its salesmen could double the number of prospects they saw in a single day.

When these models have working parts, the more successful they are. Just as every father buys a train set for his son and won't let him play with it, so there's a fascination in making machinery work, even on this tiny scale. If a man can turn a handle, and see wheels moving as a result, he is absorbed. And his interest will put him on the salesman's side.

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Some of these models, which do not imitate mechanical movement, suggest it by fluorescent devices that depict, for example, the manufacturing process in diagram form. Thus lights go up as the salesman refers to one stage in the process, and it underlines his message.

3. *Films and talking strips.* The up-to-the-minute salesman, with specialized products, can be provided with a projector and a movie. It's a valuable help to the salesman who is not himself a technical genius, for a prepared commentary is spoken over the film, putting a lucid account to the layman. The chief difficulty here is that the salesman can be left out of the picture too long. The prospect is so involved in the film – which, by the way can be shown without a lot of fuss about closing the curtains – that the salesman may have his work cut out to get the interview on an agreeable footing again.

Some prospects, too, are not prepared to stop everything to watch a film – although they would be happy to spend the same amount of time listening to the salesman. They get the impression that a film is somehow frivolous. It can be broken down with a little persuasion from you in the beginning. In any case, you should never stride in, set up your portable projector, and wait for results. They will not come. For demonstrating the product must reinforce the benefits you have told the prospect about.

Films – like models and photographs – are sales *aids*. They are not substitutes for the salesman.

4. *Literature.* If your leaflets, brochures, and catalogues are dirty, torn, and otherwise appear to have been in unsavoury places, throw them away. They will bring you more harm than good. They must be new-

minted, and carefully arranged in your brief-case, so that you alight upon the one you want at the right moment.

Any printed material about your product is reassuring to the prospect. Despite the excesses of the popular Press, there is an in-built faith in the written word. But, equally, there is a great reluctance to take it in.

If you give a man a description to read, he may glance at the beginning and even seem to absorb it to the bottom of the page – but he is just, unconsciously, pulling the wool over your eyes. He will not have understood it.

So never let the prospect get hold of your literature. When you hand it over, you will also hand over your best chance of an order. For, again, you will have lost the initiative, and he will find it easier to fob you off with a perfunctory ‘not today, thank you’. It will be useless for you to resume the sale by talking persuasively about the benefits of your products. The prospect feels that he has an easy get-out – and he will use it.

How, then, should you use these written sales aids? The most appropriate method is to produce the material but not allow him to pick it up. You do this by putting it on his desk or counter, and leaving your hand resting on it. He cannot then get hold of it without snatching. In most cases, this will not happen.

While you are in command of it, you are continuing your story about the ways in which your product can serve the prospect. When you come to a point that requires illustration or support, you turn to the appropriate place and show it.

By doing this, you are not permitting your sales

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sequence to be disrupted. And, in this connexion, there's one further point to consider. Do not ever put questions in the prospect's mind while you are showing him a brochure or a leaflet. Never say 'What do you think of this?' or 'Isn't this a good idea?'

Always state firmly the conclusion you want him to make. Say 'I know you will like this', or 'You can see how different this operation is from anything you've seen before.' Do not, in fact sow doubts by planting them yourself. You are then suggesting that he may have another opinion about your product than you hold yourself. But your job is to express your unalterable conviction.

Also, you must remember that a picture does not tell the full story. However sumptuous it may be – in black-and-white or colours – it can never live up to the real thing. For that reason, it can never be as conclusive an argument as the product itself.

The upshot is that you must not allow a brochure or a catalogue to get the upper hand. Use it to focus attention, to substantiate your description, but never as an end in itself.

What about those products or services that do not lend themselves to illustration? The answer here is that, whenever suitable, you produce pencil and paper and demonstrate the benefits. An insurance salesman, for instance, can put down the rewards a prospect might expect at sixty-five, according to his age, circumstances, and premiums. Someone selling electric typewriters can write the figures of increased secretarial output if the girls use his machines.

It is never wrong to show, rather than to tell. But it

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is always wrong if you permit your demonstration material to distract the prospect's attention from yourself and your story.

THE DRAMATIC APPROACH

Maybe you have been to a large market like London's Petticoat Lane, or listened to the patter of a street-trader. One sales trick you will always find at the very forefront of their equipment is visible proof of their claims for the product. Thus, if a material is said to be fireproof, it is subjected to a lighted match, and maybe soaked in petrol first. If it is supposed to be unbreakable, then it is hammered, or dropped. If a polish is reputed to remove all rust and stains, then a filthy piece of linoleum is treated with it.

Of course, this sort of dramatic proof is not always possible in an office or a shop. But, if it is at all practicable, use it. There is no more effective way of getting the prospect on your side.

And it should be taken a step further. Just as a stage illusionist enlists the aid of a member of the audience to show that he hasn't anything up his sleeve, so you should make the prospect effect the proof himself. If you are selling a paint that is more easily applied than any other, invite him to daub it on a piece of wood himself. If your claim for a car is that it has magnificent suspension, so that it rides over deep pot-holes without the driver noticing, then let him drive it himself.

In this way, the customer rids himself of any suspicion that he is being duped; he is proving your own point for himself, and this makes him less dubious of the rest of

your sales story. He has confidence in you and the product.

Practical demonstration is the most obvious way of describing product benefits. The lesson is that you are showing the prospect the ease, the saving, and the improvement in his current condition by on-the-spot proof. It can be extended by putting these advantages into word-pictures.

You paint a portrait of the prospect in comforting possession of the product. For instance, a central-heating system lends itself to a glowing presentation. Picture the buyer in slippered nonchalance, going out of his drawing-room into a corridor, once nippy, now warm, not having to heave coal in the dead of a winter night, and being supplied with torrents of hot water to boot.

Here you can usefully embroil the customer. Ask her: 'Haven't you felt terribly tired after a hard day's work in the kitchen, especially with all this paintwork to keep clean?' She will inevitably agree with you – and that is your cue to mention the time-and-ache-saving properties of your product.

Or ask him: 'Don't you wish that you didn't have to spend all those hours mowing the lawn? You'll find it so much faster with this ...'

You get the idea. You are selling benefits. And you are selling them in the most directly imaginative way. You are making the buyer's dreams come true. Just think of those cigarette commercials that show fashionable young men punting with gorgeous young ladies – and finding their bliss complete when they light up. It is exactly the same idea. You are showing the prospect

how his life will be, if he acquires your product. More than that, you are demonstrating, by implication, that he will never achieve this full satisfaction unless he becomes your customer.

There's another aspect of this dramatic treatment. In addition to giving the prospect a dizzy view of the future joys of ownership, you can show the product in its best light. Think of the window of a tailor's shop. You don't find the suits and overcoats stacked in piles. They are tastefully draped, elegant and creaseless, over dummies, so that the passers-by can visualize them being worn.

Similarly, if you are selling a shirt, you will draw attention to the shape of the collar and its general modishness if you display it with a neck-tie. If you are selling a china vase, you should put it on any convenient table-height furniture, shove some roses in its mouth, and let it speak for itself.

In other words, try, wherever possible, to set the product in the circumstances of the prospect. Put it where he will use it, or conjure up the image of the buyer owning it.

If you have samples that the prospect can handle, be sure that you do not confuse him by littering the place with too many different varieties. This will just confuse his choice – and may result in such indecision that he won't buy any one of them.

But do not prevent him from feeling their texture, or working their machinery. The same principle applies here as with your sales literature. Keep control of the product yourself, but point out its special features so that he can notice them, by touch or by trying them out.

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The language you use is vital at this selling stage. You can enliven it with apt comparisons and telling metaphors for dramatic impact. If a foodstuff is so delicate and gulpable that you don't know it's being swallowed, say something like: 'It goes down as smoothly as ice-cream.' If it's a fiery liquid, say that its after-effects are 'like brandy'. Relate your product, particularly if it is untried and fairly unfamiliar, to another within the prospect's experience.

You can use a comparison, too, when you describe other benefits. If your product will save labour or time, compare the economy with a housewife budgeting her weekly allowance; she wouldn't waste it at a store that charged more than others in her district, so why should he waste his own, or his company's, profits by using more costly methods?

Your words can make a new proposition vivid, by expressing it in terms he can understand.

KEEPING PACE WITH THE PROSPECT

Too many salesmen are so full of their benefits, their product information, and their buying reasons that they push on with them regardless. It must be stressed that selling is a two-way business. You have to keep step with the prospect, and you must also ensure that you are not out-pacing him.

A pell-mell interview, with all the talking on your side, will rarely achieve a sale. You can involve the prospect in two ways. You can pause every so often to give him a chance to raise any doubts, or to clear up a

misty point. Or you can deliberately ask him a question to make sure that he hasn't gone adrift.

If you decide to question him, however, you must not let him see what you are doing. You will either give him the impression that he is a slow-thinking dolt, or that he is some sort of suspected person.

'I don't suppose you've seen another instrument with this feature, have you?' Or 'It'll tone in well with your colour scheme. Didn't you say it was green and white?' Maybe the fellow will only grunt. But, if he was going off into a brown study, you have yanked him back to the matter in hand, your product. And you can also tell if he has grasped what you have told him up to that moment. If he shows he hasn't been listening, apologize for not being clear, and go over it again.

Do not ever be deceived into speeding up your delivery. You will already have gauged the mental processes of the prospect, and decided the pace. If he gives the impression that he is swallowing every word and agreeing with it, don't take it for granted. That is no reason to expedite matters. It is far more likely that his mind is otherwise engaged.

You will always find it advisable to repeat the product benefits. Depending on the prospect, you may do this before you have completed your story, or at the end, so that the whole force of your argument is summarized for him. Even if the prospect is itching to write you a cheque, this repetition does no harm. It reinforces his own decision to buy – and leaves him with the thought that he would be a prize idiot if he didn't.

For you must not lose sight of the objective, which is

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to detail every benefit of your product in language the prospect can understand. If he does not know the technical terms you use, for example, you will be missing on one cylinder and the whole sale may misfire.

Always confirm that your explanations are being absorbed. If you check on the prospect's reactions, back-peddalling and going round the circuit again if necessary, you will be in the best possible position to cope with the next stage of the sale.

For, having heard all you have to say, the prospect will raise, as likely or not, objections. And you cannot handle these in a firm and authoritative manner if you've left him in a hazy state about the product. Also, of course, he is likely to find many more grounds to object, if he thinks your product benefits lack substance.

CHAPTER NINE

WHEN a prospect jibs at buying your product, after careful and cast-iron proof that it is going to do him the world of good, your immediate reaction may be to doubt him or otherwise show your stunned amazement. This impulse must be suppressed.

Think of an objection as a chance for you to improve your case still further. For that is what it is. If he is asking, for example, about the life-span of the article, suggesting perhaps that it may be worn out in a couple of years, give him an honest and frank answer. Sympathize with his question, for he probably wouldn't ask it if it weren't a problem in his mind. Be grateful for

it, too. The prospect is well on the way to buying it. He is showing interest in your proposition by wanting further detail about it.

The skilled salesman, who can use his sequence with the utmost subtlety, will be positively delighted if the prospect raises an objection. He may invite it. He has such confidence in the product that he knows all the answers about it.

Remember, again, that objections can come while you are creating confidence and expounding product benefits. As with all steps in the sales sequence, there is no hard-and-fast division. If a prospect raises a question early in the interview, it can help the salesman no end. It indicates what will be his chief barrier to overcome. For example, if the prospect says: 'But will it be easy to get spare parts?' you have a shrewd idea that maintenance looms large as a doubt in his mind. So you will take note to spend a little longer on that aspect of the product when you come to it, or to return to it if it has already been passed.

If you can, thank the prospect for objecting at all, and immediately volunteer the fullest information in answer to it. Go right out of your way to satisfy his need, for you can be quite certain that, if you settle this matter, the journey's end is in view.

Incidentally, you may often find that the prospect has a friend or a wife in tow during the interview. You ignore them at your peril. They are often present because the prospect lacks confidence in his own judgement and is frightened of doing the wrong thing. They will be brakes holding him back from the sale, while you are urging him forward.

So address your arguments to them, as well as the prospect. Nine times out of ten, they will consult before the order is given. If you have excluded the prospect's helpmate from your attention, directing yourself entirely to the man with the money, you will be swiftly and quietly outflanked without knowing what is happening to you.

There's more than one objection to every product, although, after experience, you will find that some are more frequent than others and you can prepare yourself accordingly. Naturally, objections will be more serious and searching with an unfamiliar product. Resistance is higher, because loyalty to other brands and procedures is higher. Objections come thick and fast, too, if the salesman is himself an offensive weapon. The majority of buyers sense that they are under fire. If a salesman comes at them with the obvious intention of shooting them down, their defence mechanism works overtime. And the sale gets harder and harder and harder.

Your company may provide a manual that lists, from its previous experience, the usual objections that you will encounter. In any case, prepare your own list, and add to it by recording any additional ones that come your way during the selling day.

Then, of course, think out your answers. Do not memorize them, for you will give a robot impersonation. But be absolutely sure that you can wholly counter the criticism, or anxiety, or quibble. If you can't convince yourself, you will have even less luck with a wary prospect.

Patience has earlier been given as a cardinal virtue of

the salesman. Now it is needed at full stretch. Your first inclination may be to bridle, flush, and feel insulted when the prospect says something like 'I know about your heater – the house of a friend of mine burned to the ground through one of them.'

Your temptation is to argue, and this is fatal. You will probably have a watertight riposte for his objection, and you trot it out with every assurance that it is irrefutable. But the prospect does not accept it. So where do you go from there? What you do not proceed to do is to raise your voice and bluster.

You never convince anyone by arguing with them. You may *appear* to win, the prospect may reluctantly give way – but he won't forgive you for defeating him and will certainly look for another get-out. You are also emphasizing the existence of two clashing points of view, turning the whole relationship into a contest.

This must be wrong. How can you be of service to a man if you mean to beat him in verbal combat? The motto of every salesman should be: We can never lick 'em, so we join 'em.

Of one thing you can be sure. An objection is a legitimate question from the prospect. It is an expression of his sincere doubt. Always recognize this, and you cannot go far wrong.

There are many ways of answering, and they have one thing in common. You must show that you can put yourself in the buyer's place – and you must do that.

Here are a few rejoinders you can make:

1. 'I'm sorry that I did not make that point clear ...'

2. 'Of course, there's a lot of truth in that. But when you consider ...'

3. 'I think you are absolutely right, but don't you think ...?'

4. 'Very few people realize that, and you've got a very good point there, but ...'

5. 'I'll certainly take that up with head office, although in this instance ...'

There are dozens more where those came from – and it is an excellent idea for you to put yourself in the habit of these answers. Thus, you put yourself on his side *before* you provide an answer to his objection. This takes the sting from your rebuttal. In fact, the prospect does not realize that he is being answered; he believes he is being helped to a wise decision.

Always answer an objection straight away. Interrupt your sequence to do so. If you don't, the prospect will wait for a favourable pause to raise it again and thus won't be listening; or he will lose confidence in your ability to answer it.

A slight exception to this rule is the price objection. If this is raised early in the interview, before you have been able to explain the product benefits, then you must delay an answer. For the product benefits *are* the answer.

If it is complained that the price of a watch is too high, reply: 'It may seem so – and I agree that there are many cheaper ones on the market – but let me tell you about what this watch can do. It has ...'

If it is objected that his income just couldn't stand the strain of installing a new accounting system, reply: 'Yes, I can see that it is a very heavy outlay for a small

business. But have you thought about what economies you can make afterwards? With this equipment, you can save ...'

But every other objection must be answered when it is raised – even if it means jumping ahead and dealing with a minor benefit out of sequence. Then, of course, you go back to where you were interrupted, so that all the shots in your armoury are used.

When you have been selling your product for a month or so, you will know the majority of the objections that are aimed at it. Apart from answering them in the ways suggested above, you can also make sure that they are not raised at all.

For instance, you may be selling a typewriter that is highly portable and very light in weight, and a probable objection is that the machine is not sturdy enough to last many years. Make a point of stating: 'You'll be surprised what a long life it has. Why, only the other day I saw Mr. Smith, who told me that he'd owned one for twenty years and had never had any trouble. All he'd had to do in that time was change the ribbons.'

In this way, you are preventing the objection being expressed at all. Similarly, there may be an objection based on the prospect's business. He may have revealed, or you may have guessed that he deals mainly in large office machines, which he sells to firms in his district.

You can deal with this by saying: 'I was interested in what you said about your own customers just now. But I expect you know that executives and secretaries are buying these light machines very frequently. There's much more business travel being done, and they are so

handy to take on a train or a plane. You hardly know you are carrying one.'

Here again, you have assessed the nature of an objection, and shown that it is not an essential problem at all. The prospect has not uttered it in so many words. It is still a vague doubt in the furthest recess of his mind. Prevent him from bringing it out into the open if you can, for it then assumes much more importance.

Admiring phrases like 'I see you have a very prosperous business here' or 'I was very pleased to read in the paper about that tremendous increase in turnover your company had last year' will often anticipate an objection about price, or a plea of poverty and tightening purse-strings. Most people are gratified if their business acumen and enterprise is praised. Once they have acknowledged your tribute – which should not, by the way, be mere idle flattery, but based on fact – it is almost impossible for them to suggest that they can't afford your product. Such an objection would put them in the position of being tight-fisted and mean.

Whether you should wait for the objection, or meet it halfway, is a moot point. Your choice – and it *is* your choice, when you have sufficient selling experience – depends so much on circumstances and the prospect's character.

In general, however, let those objections that are incidental and minor be raised openly, so that the prospect can be suitably impressed by your conclusive answer. But try and anticipate those objections that might lose you the sale, and introduce them in the course of your presentation.

Whichever course you adopt, never put an objection

like this: 'I expect you are going to say that you can't afford it' or 'I imagine you have been told that this engine is not as powerful as other makes.' This is a great error. It may be that the prospect is thinking nothing of the sort, in which case you are planting the seeds of rebellion within him for no good purpose. Otherwise, he gathers from you that it is a very common criticism of your product – that it is expensive, or weak-engined – and remembers the objection rather than the answer.

Always be attentive to objections. Don't scan the far corners of the room, implying that the prospect is raising such trivial matters that it is not worth your trouble to settle them.

Appear to deliberate seriously over what he has said, and give a considered reply. Of course, your answer will be on the tip of your tongue if you have prepared yourself properly for the sale. But a swift, pert, or mechanical response will not bring comfort. Answers not only have to be given – they have to be seen to be given.

The complementary fault is to take the objection so ponderously that you answer it down to the tiniest detail. This tends to give the prospect the impression that he has really got hold of something big. His objection is blown up beyond its true importance, and looms like an iceberg in the path of a safe order. Answer simply and forcefully, and then pass on to your next point. By doing this, the prospect does not feel that he has sparked off a full-scale crisis.

The indirect way of countering objections is the right way in nine cases out of ten. But you must use your common sense. If a prospect comes out with: 'But

won't it fall apart in my hands?' you will hardly be wise to start off 'I agree, but, of course ...' Here you deny the charge point-blank. The reply would be: 'No, this never happens. It is really quite impossible, for the materials and the workmanship are so carefully selected and checked before leaving the factory that any faulty ones are detected and withdrawn.'

A forthright denial will be reassuring, and the salesman's confident certainty will help his case. Of course, if he can support his statement with guarantees or personal promises that, if anything went wrong with the equipment, he would see that it was replaced, he can soften the blow of a head-on collision.

We have tended to assume that your product is of tip-top quality, so that you can justly claim that it is the finest answer to the prospect's need. But this may not always be the case. Some products are cheaper because they do not have all the refinements of their rivals. They are value for money, and, if the prospect wants extra quality, he would have to pay more for it.

How do you meet objections with this product? The prospect may, for example, object that a low-priced fountain-pen doesn't appear to have a large ink capacity. Your answer would be: 'Yes, you are quite right, and I am glad that you've brought it up. But, of course, you must remember that a fountain-pen costing twice this one will only hold a third more ink. You have the benefit of much better value for the money.'

In this way, you are providing an alternative to the objection. You are balancing a disadvantage with a benefit, and, indeed, showing the prospect that he is being far cannier with his money if he buys your

product than if he invests in the costlier competitor.

Although a salesman should never betray that he thinks so, some objections are pretty baseless. Many may be founded on hearsay – ‘But this washing-up liquid causes blisters’, for instance. A quick and effective way of squashing such wild allegations is to ask: ‘Oh, I’m so sorry. When did that happen to you?’ Inevitably, the prospect retires in confusion, or admits that he’d heard about it in the four-ale bar. The salesman then condoles with him for being taken in by a rumour, as he has so frequently been deceived himself.

To summarize, here are the five main ways in which you can refute the objector:

1. *Indirectly.* By accepting that the doubt is valid and then showing that it can not apply to your product.

2. *Directly.* When you can courteously prove that the prospect’s view is incorrect.

3. *Balancing his point.* When he makes a sound objection, you can counter it with other benefits.

4. *Reversing the objection.* By showing the prospect that his argument is really an excellent reason for buying.

5. *By a question.* When the objection is frivolous and you can persuade the prospect himself to recognize its flimsiness.

These methods are only valuable, naturally, if you stand a chance of making a sale. If your prospecting has been slack, or, through no fault of your own, you have erred in concluding that a man needs your product, you will come up against an unshakable decision not to buy. If this is truly the case – and you must be sure that when he says ‘I have no possible

need for your product' he really means it – then pack your bag and say a polite farewell. Insistence on your own part will only make an enemy – and there may come a time when that prospect will come into your life again.

But you may have answered all the vocal objections and the prospect is still reluctant to buy. This is one of the most sensitive points in selling. There is some hidden stumbling-block and you must find a detour round it.

You may be able to find a clue by flashing your mind back over the course of the interview. What were the prospect's reactions when you mentioned one benefit? Although he didn't say anything, did he seem slightly more restive, or did his eyes wander away from yours? This may indicate that he wasn't fully convinced, or that he was comparing it unfavourably with a product he'd been shown beforehand.

A gentle probe might pin him down. It might go like this: 'Perhaps you are worried that the material is not very durable. Well, I can explain that a little more fully, if you like.' If he nods in assent, you can be sure that you have hit on the reason for his not closing the sale. In fact, if you can meet that objection, he will be convinced.

The stand-offish prospect can also be nailed down by asking him what is troubling him. Say 'I could go on much longer telling you about this product. But I know your time is valuable. Is there anything else I can tell you that will make the picture more complete?'

Then, likely as not, the prospect will come out with the objection that secretly haunts him and mystifies you. If this happens, you are at the last hurdle. You have

isolated the single aspect that troubles him, and you can concentrate your powers on that, knowing that the order will come if you deal with it fairly.

If you have had any difficulty in getting to see the prospect, you may be faced with these hidden objections. He may have made excuses before, or cancelled an earlier appointment at short notice and by proxy, or said, when you went in, that he can only spare a couple of minutes because of some other, urgent business.

All this may, but will not always, mean that the prospect will trump up some excuse to avoid closing the sale. He will have to dash out – and will do so at a rate of knots. He may have to consult a colleague about it, and will resolutely refuse to commit himself. But, once you have managed to obtain the interview, stay as long as you can – without attracting the attention of the police, or a bouncer.

Then you can soon tell whether the difficult buyer really has a case against the product, or whether he is just allergic to salesmen, as many are. If the latter, then you must refer back to your approach technique.

But if the prospect seems unwilling to decide towards the end of the sale, and tries to postpone the order by asking you to call back or leave some literature, then try to revive his flagging interest in the most apposite feature of your product. If he wants a cricket set for little Jimmy and fobs you off by saying that little Jimmy must be canvassed about it, then expand on the utter bliss that will radiate from the said Jimmy when he receives it as a present. In other words, treat even a delaying objection as if it were strongly felt, and calmly suggest a way round it.

KINDS OF OBJECTION

Let's take a closer look at some of the more prevalent objections – the ones that apply to practically every product and every salesman.

1. 'I have been in business all my life, and done pretty well for myself without buying from you.' This stick-in-the-mud attitude is quite common, and can be countered by praise of the prospect. Admire his success, and then go on to explain how new products must have been introduced in his business during that time – or he would still be using oil-lamps for illumination and aspidistras for decoration. Ask him when he did introduce a new line for the last time. Then stress the efficiency of your product, its profit margins, the fact that go-ahead enterprises all over the country are using it. Thus, you are making him feel a dyed-in-the-wool square, out of touch with the twentieth century, if he does not buy from you.

2. 'I've always bought from old so-and-so, and he's one of the best friends I have.' Whatever you do here, do not attempt to undermine his loyalty to another firm or another salesman. Congratulate him upon it, and stress the value of friendly bonds in business. Explain that you have no intention of destroying his ties with another company. You will merely want to receive the same consideration from him. Why doesn't he make a small order at first, and then, if his customers like the product, talk it over with you when you come round again? Few will resist this appeal, and the orders will probably grow in size as the months go by.

3. 'There just isn't any demand for that sort of thing

in this area.' An excellent argument can be put forward here. What, you may ask, would happen if no one stocked anything unless customers asked for it? Business would stagnate. The very fact that a product is available creates a demand. After all, no one is going to ask for liquor in a grocery store if that retailer doesn't display some bottles to indicate that he stocks it.

4. 'Look at my shelves. They are bulging with stuff. I just haven't room for any more.' First of all, compliment the prospect on the range and quality of his stocks, and ask him if he has any lines that are very slow-moving; there will inevitably be one or two. Can he afford to use so much valuable display space for goods that seem to be a drug on the market? With your product, he will be able to turn over stocks faster, and his customers will appreciate being given the extra choice . . .

5. 'It costs too much.' This parrot-cry will ring in your ears every working day. Whatever you sell, it is always too dear for somebody. You have to discriminate between the price objection that is genuine and the one that is just a habit. Women are often prone to reject a product because it is too dear and then spend more money at the next counter.

The genuine objector is answered by reiterating the quality and the benefits he will receive with the product. Tell him that price alone is an unimportant factor for the buyer. Anyone can buy the cheapest available, but it will be false economy if it lasts only a quarter of the time of the dearer product. For durable goods, break down the cost to a yearly or a monthly sum. A washing-machine, for example, may cost only about four shillings a week, at a minimum use of five years.

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An office filing system may work out at only three or four pounds a week over a longer period, and the saving in time and salaries will be much greater than that. On the other hand, do not attempt to bargain over the price. Stick to the amount stated – although, of course, any special discounts for ordering in bulk can be given. If you seem to be in the mood to come down a pound or two the prospect will force you to do so. Then, you are not selling your product on its merits. You are more or less, saying that the benefits you have so carefully explained are not worth the money you asked for them.

Secondly, if the price objection is just an excuse for not buying, try to emphasize the value of the product so that it will come out cheaper in the long run. If a suit is noted for its long-wearing qualities over a period of years, compare it with one that goes shapeless and shiny in eighteen months. Yours is the wiser investment, the money-saver.

These are just a few of the objections you will encounter in your daily round. They cannot possibly be exhaustive, for there are as many doubts as there are products.

You must not think of them as fatuous interjections, or wilful refusal to accept your beautifully articulated facts. They are signs of interest on the part of the prospect. At the very least, they indicate that he knows what you are talking about.

And, as a final tip, a good way to tell if his objections are authentic or not is to look him straight in the eye. If he shifts uneasily, he is bluffing. Then you play your ace.

CHAPTER TEN

Now we come to the ultimate test of the salesman's skill. He must close the sale, and come away with an order. The odd thing here – and it is very hard to believe – is that failure to close is the greatest single fault amongst salesmen. They find a perfect prospect, create confidence and desire, cope diplomatically with every objection – and come away empty-handed. Sometimes they just forget to ask for the order. Sometimes, when confronted with a personality stronger than their own, they hesitate to put the fateful question.

You have all seen one of those footballers who have wonderful ball control, pass the ball elegantly and accurately, impudently by-pass opponents – but for all their mastery, they cannot score goals. Many salesmen are in the same boat. They have a blind spot when the prize is almost secure.

Obviously, this means that they are wasting an awful lot of time. There is absolutely no point in a perfect sales sequence if the final stage is flunked.

One reason for not getting the order may be that something has gone wrong earlier in the interview. This may not be apparent to the salesman at the time, but he may be able to guess at it and remedy it. When he is experienced enough to realize that he has created the desire to buy in the prospect, the cackle must be cut. There is no reason for any more talk, and the garrulous man, who does not snatch at the chance of closing the

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sale when the prospect is prepared for it, will often chat himself out of the order. Delay gives the prospect time to brood, and, if he is receptive to buying, his thoughts can only veer against you.

We have often emphasized that the sales sequence is not departmentalized. Each stage may overlap another. But this applies less to the close. You may be tempted to ask for the order soon after the approach. The prospect seems to want the product, even before you have fully explained it to him. Resist the temptation to close too early. You may have misinterpreted his reactions, and, in any case, it can do no harm to reinforce his desire by your product benefits.

Always have the close in mind at every stage of the interview. For example, you may have good reason to believe that the prospect will order in large quantities, or will want the most expensive item in your range. Remember this – so that you do not talk in terms of a few pounds, when you are after hundreds. If you give the prospect the idea that you have only a small order in mind, he will dig his toes in when you ask for a larger one.

Also with the close in mind, have your order book or contract visible throughout. It doesn't then come as a shock to the prospect when you produce it, and if it shows signs of heavy use with copy records of previous sales, all the better. The prospect will get the inference that he is joining a happy band of satisfied customers, and this gives him assurance.

And do not tense up. The close should not, like the hectic end of a detective story, be a dramatic climax. Any sign of nervousness on your part will unsettle the

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prospect. Treat it as the predictable end of an unassailable argument. The more you can play down the close, the likelier you are to get the order.

You can estimate that the prospect is ready to buy in various ways. He will seem more relaxed. His interest will be more eagerly expressed. He may ask a question like 'When can I expect delivery?' showing that his mind is practically made up in your favour.

But if you are uncertain of his attitude, ask a question like 'Don't you think it's wonderful value for the money?' or 'Has your present model got a gadget like this?' Any positive response will decide you to ask for the order.

Timing the close is also regulated by the prospect's familiarity with the product. It's a good rule that you should never hurry the close if he is totally unfamiliar with it. He will need to be told all its benefits, and to ponder them. But, if he knows something about the goods, then watch closely for a buying signal quite early in the sale. Even if you don't act upon it straight away, the knowledge will prevent you from dulling his desire with talk.

WAYS OF CLOSING

There are many tried methods of clinching a sale. Before we examine them, however, let's not forget the most obvious. Which is to ask for it outright. You don't need any closing devices if the prospect has already shown that he wants to buy. The methods listed here should only be used for those prospects who are hesitant or dubious.

1. *The Alternative Close.* If a prospect has lingering doubts, he may easily say 'no' if you put a direct question to him. And if he does turn down the proposition, you must either give up or, if you think you can change his mind, embark on a long uphill struggle to alter his judgement.

You can prevent the barriers going up by offering the buyer a choice. Take it for granted that he has made up his mind, and say: 'Would you like the seventeen-inch or the twenty-one-inch?' or 'Do you prefer the walnut or the mahogany finish?' or 'Shall I send you a hundred or a hundred-and-fifty?'

The prospect, too, will be influenced by your own assumption that he is going to place some sort of order. He may even come to believe that he has said as much. But, as with all these types of close, try and fit it to the individual temperament. Some suspicious fellows may be hardened against you, because they feel that they are being rushed into buying.

However, it is more than probable that the prospect, if you have judged your moment correctly, will state his preference. Immediately, fill out the order form, or pack the goods, or get on the phone – or whatever your procedure may be for putting the order into effect. You will then make it almost impossible for the prospect to retrace his steps. He has told you he would like, say, twenty of the pink ones, and that is all you want to know.

Some salesmen spoil their alternative close by quibbling after the prospect has spoken. If they have asked him to choose a quantity and he goes for the lesser, they try to persuade him to increase his order.

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This is a sure way to lose the sale altogether, for you delay filling out the order and give him time to grow uneasy.

In any case, if you are giving the man a choice of quantity, the lowest figure should be the most you think he will buy.

2. *The Inducement Close.* Although we have talked, quite properly, of the salesman as a servant of the customer, there will generally be a bargaining element in every sale. The rivalry between buyer and seller, especially when they are both professional, is very real.

In this sort of situation, the salesman should seem to concede a point to close the sale, so that it leaves the prospect with the glow of a victor, or that he is being treated with special consideration.

There may be display material with your product, very helpful to a retailer in getting his customers to know about a new line. Say: 'We'll be able to help you with the order. The company has just received some wonderful posters from its advertizing agents, and I'll make sure that you get some.'

There may be after-sales service with your product, and this can be used to close the order: 'When you get delivery, one of our engineers will come within twenty-four hours to install it and make sure that it is running properly. And, if you have any trouble in the future, you have only to give me a ring and I will see that it is attended to straight away.'

In fact, if you do not need to use these special inducements during your benefit explanation, keep them up your sleeve for the close. They may be small matters, or merely additional services that are common business

practice. But they may swing the balance, and they can also be used to impress on the prospect that you assume he is making an order.

3. *The Summary Close.* If you have been talking to a man for anything up to an hour, you will have covered quite a lot of ground. Certainly, not all of it will be retained by the prospect. For a short while, his attention may have been elsewhere; or the product has so many selling facets that they can't all be grasped in one sitting.

The summary close is self-explanatory. You go over the product benefits briefly, maybe by ticking them off on your fingers, so that the prospect is fully aware of all the important advantages. If he has shown an extra interest in one or two of them during the interview, then emphasize these even further during the summary. For they are the points that come nearest to his own interests.

Many precise people prefer to hear a recapitulation in this way. They like to know all the pros and cons, so that they are fully aware of every consideration before they invest their money.

When you run through the benefits, however, don't forget to relate them to the prospect. 'This is what you will get out of it' or 'Think how this will improve your home' should be the burden of your summary.

4. *The 'Unless' Close.* This, again, requires careful watching. Just as fear is a buying motive, so it can be boldly played upon to close the sale. It may be that your product, selling to retailers, is highly fashionable. Suggest to the prospect that 'if he doesn't stock it, many of his customers will go down the road to another store that does.'

If a man refuses to take out insurance, suggest that it may happen that disaster will strike and his wife be reduced to a meagre pittance. Every day without proper security is a risk.

Anyone is likely to be jolted into a decision if he is told the danger of delay. He may want a book, but he has postponed buying it. If he is told that, unless he does so straight away, it will go out of print, he will dip into his pocket.

But, to some prospects, this close can seem like intimidation and they will puff out their chests and refuse to be frightened. The way you use the close can prevent this, but it is wiser not to try it on the burly fellow who obviously doesn't suffer from nightmares.

5. *The Detail Close.* With costly products, the decision to buy is a major one. A man is being asked to invest a large sum of money, and he is not going to behave as if it were loose change. But, in these circumstances, you can make the path easier by getting him to agree on a minor point. This focusses his attention on a subsidiary aspect, and gets him receptive to the larger proposition.

Thus, if you are selling filing cabinets, ask: 'Would you like one with a little extra depth for files? I would guess that this is fine for your business, but we can supply a cabinet that is a little roomier. What do you think about it?'

It doesn't matter what he thinks about it. You have made him agree that one type is more suitable than another. He is conditioned to buy.

Similarly, if your product is a sewing-machine, say: 'This is very useful, this gadget that allows you to

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thread the cotton easily, whatever the thickness. Don't you agree that it's a great advantage over the older machines?'

He will inevitably concur. And the result is the same.

Whatever close you alight on, follow it with speedy action. Prepare the order and ask him to put a name to it. Request permission to phone your dispatch department to verify date of delivery. Be brisk, but not brusque. For the real close is the prospect's signature to an order. Asking you to call back another day is not enough. Leaving a form for him to complete is not enough, for many use that as an excuse for not buying. You will soon learn to know an excuse for what it is, and you must on no account accept it, after the prospect has agreed to buy from you. It is so easy for him to write you a letter, saying that he has put his order elsewhere, or to get his secretary to phone with a brief apology. You are then up the creek, and expostulation and anger will get you nowhere.

So close the order at the end of the interview. There is no other way.

With all these types of close, one general point can be made. Whether you are summarizing benefits or giving alternatives, the word 'you' is the most essential one in your vocabulary. 'You will find that ...' and 'You may like this or that ...' will work wonders. It gives the prospect a foretaste of possessing the article, and gets him used to the idea.

AFTER THE SALE

Let's picture the salesman with an order. Does he

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show his elation, and generally behave as if a sale is such a rare event in his life that he has to celebrate it like an anniversary? He does not. He takes it in his stride. It is the outcome he has always expected, and he is sure that he is doing the customer a service. Any undue joy suggests that he has defeated a formidable opponent, and will leave a nasty taste in the customer's mouth.

Remember the principle of service and you can't go far wrong. If there is time, and the order is settled, discuss it a little further by all means. Ask politely about other aspects of the customer's business. If the product is costly, or the order large, ring the customer when he has had delivery and check that everything is running smoothly.

For by turning a prospect into a customer, you have made an acquaintance who may turn into a friend. You will probably want to do business with him again – even if it is years later. So, when you make a sale, don't just dump the product. Leave a good impression as well.

If you come away without an order, do likewise. Thank the prospect for giving you so much of his time. Ask him to get in touch with you if you can help him at any time. Do not promise to call back, for this sets up further resistance. But never betray annoyance that he has not bought.

Finally, if expensive equipment is to be installed, try and be present when it happens. The customer will be impressed by your courtesy. He has identified you with your company – and the engineers or technicians who are doing the work will be strangers to him. He will appreciate a friendly face.

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The close is the end of one sale. But it may be the start of a prosperous and congenial relationship stretching ahead over the years. Treat it as such, and you will not be overlooked when your product needs replacement or the customer wants advice about another line in your range.

ENDPIECE

We have followed the craft of selling through from your first attraction to it to your first successful sale. We have tried to exclude minor matters, and give a clear outline to the main skills involved.

A salesman is a man who uses his personality and product knowledge to serve another human being. It is an unselfish occupation, and it should never be thought of in any other way.

Having read so far, you are now in a position to reap the rewards we surveyed in the opening chapter. In fact, there is only one thing wrong with the organization of this book. Its sale sequence should end with the money you can expect.

For if you are solely in selling for money you won't get to the top. It's paradoxical – but you can prove it for yourself.

DEVELOP YOUR PERSONALITY

IMPROVE YOUR PROFICIENCY

REALISE YOUR PROSPECTS

INCREASE YOUR PROSPERITY

Selling is today's fastest-growing profession. It is teeming with opportunity; it has plenty of room at the top.

No longer is a salesman a hit-and-miss merchant. He is a trained individual, with command of all the techniques of modern marketing. He is a vital factor in every industry, since it is useless producing the goods unless you create customers to buy them.

This is an up-to-the-minute guide to a fascinating and rewarding career. It is packed with vital facts and expert advice and helps you to equip yourself for it. Above all, it shows you how to sell yourself.

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